

Dear Parent/ Carers,

📱 Smartphones & Children: What every parent needs to know

We are writing to you as a group of schools from the Gosforth Schools' Trust because we are concerned about the impact of smartphones on children and young people. In addition to our own concerns, we think there may also be an appetite from parents, particularly of younger children, to try to push back against what can feel like overwhelming pressure to provide a smart phone for your child at an earlier age than feels comfortable.

The purpose of this letter is not to create pressure, or to make those of you who have given smartphones to your children feel bad: instead, it is about trying to give you more information about smartphones and their potential impact and ways in which we might support you around this challenging issue.

⚠️ Why we're concerned

Smartphones give children instant access to the internet, messaging, apps and social media — but with that comes a range of risks. Most smartphones are designed for adults, not young children. Here's what every parent should be aware of:

! Top dangers of Smartphones for children under 11

🚫 Danger	🔍 What It Means
Inappropriate Content	Easy access to violent, sexual or disturbing content, even with basic filters.
Online Predators	Apps with chat features can allow strangers to contact your child.
Cyberbullying	Group chats and social media make it easier for bullying to happen without adults knowing.
Screen Addiction	Constant notifications and games can impact sleep, focus, and behaviour.
Mental Health Issues	Social media can affect body image, self-esteem and increase anxiety in young users.

✅ Our Advice: Protecting your child

🔒 Delay smartphone use

Children don't need full smartphones at primary age (up to the age of 11). Consider basic phones (call/text only) if needed for safety.

🕒 Set firm screen time rules

Limit phone use, especially before bed or during meals. Phones should stay out of bedrooms at night.

🛡️ Use strong parental controls

Install family safety apps (like Google Family Link or Apple Screen Time) to filter content and monitor usage.

👂 Stay involved

Know what apps your child is using. Encourage open conversations and check in regularly.

💬 Talk about online safety

Teach children to tell an adult if something makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

? Did You Know?

- 📱 **Over 50% of 9–11 year olds** have seen something online that upset them.
- 📱 Many popular apps (TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat) have a **minimum age of 13**, but children often use them anyway.
- 🛌 **Excessive phone use before bed** can lead to poor sleep, which affects mood, behaviour and learning.

♥ Let's work together

We want to support you in making informed decisions. If you're unsure about:

- **Which apps are safe**
- **How to set parental controls**
- **Talking to your child about the risks**

Please reach out to us — we're here to help.

Thank you for working with us to keep our children safe.

Warm regards,

I could then add all head teacher names along with names of their schools?

Internet Matters: <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/mobile-phone-safety-checklist/>

Internet Matters: <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/tech-guide/mobile-phones-for-children/>

UK Safer Internet Centre: <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers/phones>

Barnardos: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/blog/keeping-your-child-safe-their-smartphone>

NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/access-to-technology-for-different-ages/>

BBC Bitesize: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zfcctcw#z388s82>

Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/mobile-phone-safety/>

Children's Society: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/blogs/should-children-have-mobile-phones>

Common Sense Media: <https://www.common Sense Media.org/articles/cellphones-and-devices-a-guide-for-parents-and-caregivers>

To set up parental controls: <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/smartphones-and-other-devices/>