

# Ashbourne Primary School

Headteacher: Paula Chisholm

Co-Headteacher: Heather Davis

Chair of Governors: Ashley Tabony



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Dear Parents and Carers,

## Re: Supporting a Smartphone-Free Childhood – What the Research Tells Us and How We Can Act Together

We are writing to you today to share important insights and invite you to join a growing movement of families committed to protecting childhood in the digital age.

Across the UK, schools and parents are increasingly concerned about the impact of smartphones and social media on children's wellbeing, development, and safety. Recent surveys and expert guidance have highlighted the risks and offered a clear path forward.

### What the Research Tells Us

- **Mental Health Risks:** Studies show that early smartphone use is linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness among young people. The younger a child receives their first smartphone, the worse their mental health outcomes tend to be.
- **Exposure to Harmful Content:** Smartphones can expose children to cyberbullying, grooming, pornography, and violent material. These risks are especially concerning when children are unsupervised online.
- **Academic and Social Disruption:** Smartphones are “experience blockers,” distracting children from real-world interactions and learning. The average UK 12-year-old now spends nearly 30 hours a week on their smartphone.
- **Parental Pressure:** Many parents feel they must give their child a smartphone simply because “everyone else has one.” But surveys show that most parents actually want to delay – they just need support to do so.

### The Parent Pact

The **Smartphone Free Childhood Parent Pact** is a national initiative that empowers parents to collectively delay giving their child a smartphone until at least age 14, and social media until age 16. Over 150,000 families have already signed the pact, representing more than 40% of UK schools.

By signing the pact, you:

- Join a supportive community of like-minded parents.
- Help shift the social norm in your school and local area.
- Gain confidence to say “not yet” to smartphones, knowing others are doing the same.

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## What Schools Are Doing

Many schools have already taken steps to promote smartphone-free childhoods and encouraging alternative communication tools like basic phones or tracking devices.

## What You Can Do

- **Delay** giving your child a smartphone until secondary school or later.
- **Talk** to other parents about joining the pact together.
- **Attend** school events and workshops on digital wellbeing.
- **Explore** alternatives like basic phones or supervised online access.

Please click the link to complete our survey so we can gauge parent opinion for a smartphone free childhood.

<https://forms.office.com/e/gibDAXRhBY>

Together, we can reclaim childhood from the pressures of the digital world and give our children the space to grow, connect, and thrive.

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,

Paula Chisholm and Heather Davis

Headteachers