



St John's Green Primary School

Learn to Live, Live to Learn

Headteacher Mr Simon Billings
Assistant Headteacher Mrs Clare Skinner
Assistant Headteacher/SENCo Mrs Fiona Bullivant

We  Maths



We are growing our learning

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18th July 2025.



<https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/>

Dear Parents,

First of all my apologies for the length of this letter, but we felt it was important that we summed up the information that has been shared with you over the last Half Term.

As stated in the newsletter, from September children will not be able to bring 'Smart' phones into school. In essence, a 'Smart' phone is a phone that behaves like a mini computer – it typically has a touchscreen, internet access and the ability to run downloaded apps.

The school, through the weekly newsletters has made its position very clear about this and why we feel we need to take a proactive stance with regards to, 'Smart' phones in school.

Parents will remember that we first made parents aware of this in the School Newsletter on 28th March. When in the FGB meeting report Mrs. Vasquez Walters wrote:

'The most exciting news for me however was learning that the school will be a smart phone free school for children as of September. The idea was raised by parents and is wholly supported by the Governing Body. All current research shows that excessive screen time has a negative effect on young minds. It is very much a topic of conversation in the media currently, due to recent programmes around how damaging phones can be to mental health and relationships (Swiped – the school that banned smartphones can be found on All4 and Adolescence can be found on Netflix). We are confident that this change will see an improvement in well being and concentration but appreciate that it is a change so if you or your child has any concerns about this please speak to the class teacher or Mr Billings, Mrs Bullivant or Mrs Skinner. More details will follow in due course.'

On 23rd May, we informed parents that from after Half Term, the expectation for our children was that if they were bringing their 'Smart' phones into school they should not be using them on the school site.

From after Half Term, the school has talked weekly about the fact that the school would be 'Smart' phone free for children from September.

On 6th June, we talked about 'The Opportunity Cost to Childhood.'

The average UK teenager now spends around 35 hours a week on their smartphone. That's more than a fulltime job – and for many, it starts even earlier. What's missing in all that time? Face-to-face conversations.

St John's Green Abbey Fields Site
(Years EYFS, 1, 5, 6)
5 Circular Road East
Colchester
CO2 7SZ



St John's Green Town Site
(Years 2, 3, 4)
St John's Green
Colchester
CO2 7HE

Messy outdoor games. Moments of boredom that spark creativity. The chance to develop confidence and resilience – without the filter of a screen. We often treat smartphones like neutral tools. But they're not just phones – they're immersive, addictive environments designed to be hard to put down. And every hour they take up is an hour not spent doing something more enriching.

On 12th June, we talked about 'Changing how Children see Themselves.'

One of the most overlooked trade-offs is emotional development. Smartphones give children constant access to social media – and with it, a relentless stream of filtered images, curated lives and addictive feedback loops. These platforms push kids to measure their worth in likes, follows and comparisons.

They create new rules for social life and identity. And it's having a real impact. For girls especially, studies show links between social media use and rising rates of anxiety, depression and body image issues. This isn't just about what kids see. It's about how it makes them feel – about themselves, their friendships and their place in the world.

On 20th June, we talked about 'Dumb Phones' and included a link on the newsletter explaining what a 'dumb' phone was.

We've had a couple of emails into the school with regards to phones and the inconvenience that it could potentially cause not allowing children to have 'smart' phones in school from September. A 'smart' phone is a phone that has internet connectivity, which allows parents to install age inappropriate apps, such as 'WhatsApp' (age 16), 'Snapchat' (age 13), TikTok (age 13). WhatsApp, in particular, causes the school and more importantly the children the most problems, which is why the age rating is 16. The school is supporting 'Smartphone Free Childhood' because it sees pretty much daily the impact that the phones have on children and their emotional development. If parents feel, that their child must have a phone so they can call them at the end of the school day, then on the website 'Smartphone Free Childhood' there are child friendly alternatives to 'Smart' phones. These phones can be termed 'dumb' phones because they allow the user to make phone calls and that's about it. They are also significantly cheaper.

<https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/alternatives>

The school is banning 'Smart' phones from September. The school will allow the alternatives to a 'Smart' phone. However, if children do choose to bring their 'Smart' phone into school, from September, it will be taken off them and parents will have to come to the Office to collect them.

On 27th June, we talked about 'Adolescent Brains being most at Risk.'

Teenage brains are still under construction – especially the parts responsible for impulse control, emotional regulation and decision-making. And smartphones, with their infinite scroll, relentless notifications and dopamine-driven design, are reshaping how young minds experience reward, attention and connection.

Smartphones aren't inherently 'bad'. They're powerful, remarkable tools. But that's the point – they're powerful. And kids are the most vulnerable to their effects. Their brains aren't ready for the responsibility that comes with constant access to the online world. That's not a judgement of their maturity – it's just biology.

There is now a growing body of research linking heavy smartphone use to poor sleep, reduced concentration, higher levels of anxiety, and lower overall well-being. These aren't just passing side effects – they're changes that can affect how children learn, interact, and develop in the long term.

Smartphones also come with intense social pressure – group chats, FOMO, and the constant fear of being left out. And then there's the content itself. Kids can easily stumble across things they're just not developmentally

ready for – from pornography to pro-anorexia content to toxic ideologies. These devices are also designed to be addictive. Their business model depends on keeping kids scrolling, not teaching them balance or self-regulation. In its most simple form with regards to phones—addiction is ‘using something to the point where it could be harmful to you.’

On 4th July, we clarified why the school had decided to take the step it had and asked parents to watch a short video showing the impact that a ‘Smart’ phone has on their well-being.

We are getting steadily closer to the time when children will not be able to bring Smart Phones into school. Please remember that from September, children will not be able to do this. The school has clarified this and our reasons why and the alternatives to smart phones in the school newsletters over the course of this term. If you do feel you have missed something, please go to the school website and look in the Newsletter link to read about the information the school has shared. Please have a look at this video to see the impact that smart phones have on children's wellbeing. Basically if your child has a smart phone—you should watch this.

<https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/resource/a-stolenchildhood-short-film>

And last week, we said we'd send you out this summary.

I do fully appreciate that it's a big change as far as children are concerned, but please trust me when I say that there is nothing to be gained by a child having a ‘Smart’ phone at their age. There's also very little justification for it bearing in mind all the above information and the alternative ‘dumb’ phone solution, which will do the job that parents want it to, with regards to contacting their children.

Please also take the time to look through the website <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/> there is a wealth of information on here to support your decision to not allow your child to have a ‘Smart’ phone.

Regards,



Simon Billings
Headteacher