

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Woodlands, we are committed to supporting children's wellbeing and development — both in and out of the classroom. With this in mind, we want to share important information with you about smartphone use among primary-aged children and the steps we will be taking as a school from September 2025.

### Woodlands and the Smartphone Free Childhood movement

Earlier this year, one of our Woodlands' parents introduced us to the Smartphone Free Childhood campaign (<https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/>), which has now been supported by over 350,000 parents across the UK. The campaign encourages families to delay giving children smartphones until they are ready – socially and emotionally.

We've done our own research – and the evidence is compelling. We're also seeing the real-world effects of smartphones in school. That's why, together with Woodlands' parents and other local schools, we're working in partnership and have met with our local MP to explore strategies for protecting children's digital wellbeing across Tonbridge.

### New approach to smartphones effective September 2025

To align our school's approach with our commitment to child wellbeing, the following changes will come into effect:

**Next year's Year 5 and below:** children will not be permitted to bring smartphones to school. If a phone is needed for contact, it must be a basic or non-smart device.

**Next year's Year 6:** we strongly discourage smartphones and recommend alternatives.

**From September 2026, Woodlands will be a smartphone free school for all children.**

The delay in starting this from September 2025 is to acknowledge that some children in the current Year 5 will already own smartphones.

*Please read on for tips for parents deciding when to get their child a smartphone.*



**Headteacher:** Mrs Vicki Lonie BA QTS (Hons) NPQH  
Hunt Road, Tonbridge Kent TN10 4BB  
Tel: 01732 355577

**Email:** [office@woodlands.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@woodlands.kent.sch.uk)  
[www.woodlands.kent.sch.uk](http://www.woodlands.kent.sch.uk)

## 5 tips for parents deciding when to get their child a smartphone

If you're worried about giving your child a smartphone but don't want them to feel left out, you're not alone. Many parents are facing the same dilemma. Here are five practical tips to help you decide when – or if – it's the right time.

### 1. Making an informed decision

Before making any decisions, take some time to understand how smartphones can impact young people's mental health, sleep and focus. Watching the Channel 4 documentary *Swiped*, on which Dr Rangan Chatterjee is the expert voice, is a great start. In addition, we are running an [information stand at our Open Evening on Wednesday 10th July from 5–7pm](#) – please stop by and have a chat with us about this issue.



### 2. Have open conversations

Talk openly with your child. Share your concerns, but also listen to how they feel. Explain that this decision is about supporting their health and future, not just enforcing rules. Honest conversations build trust and understanding.

### 3. Discuss the benefits of being smartphone-free

Help your child see the positives. Without a smartphone, they have more time for hobbies, spending quality time with friends and building independence. Focus on what they'll gain, not what they're missing.

### 4. Offer alternatives

If they feel left out or are concerned about not having a particular app, consider letting them use it on a shared family device so you can keep an eye on what they're up to. Or get them a simple phone – there are loads of good options which enable them to keep in touch, without the potential risks of the internet or social media. Check out this [guide to the best simple phones](#).



### 5. Sign a Parent Pact with others

The [Parent Pact](#) lets you join a community of like-minded parents waiting until at least Year 9 to get their child a smartphone. See how many others have signed in your child's school and year group, and connect with them via your regional Smartphone Free Childhood

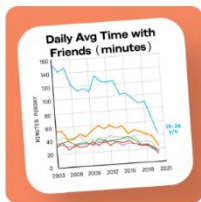
WhatsApp group or the Woodlands [group](#), to reduce the peer pressure.

*Please read on to understand what impact smartphones are having on our young people.*

## Children and smartphones – what’s the big deal?

When smartphones first entered children’s lives a decade ago, there was no research into their impact. Now there is - and the findings are stark. Smartphones weren't designed with kids in mind but they’ve reshaped childhood almost overnight. In the UK, 89% of 12-year-olds now own one, and so do a quarter of children aged 5 to 7. On average, kids get their first smartphone aged nine.

Instead of growing up slowly, children are being pulled into a digital world built to keep them hooked. The impact on their development, mental health and relationships runs deep – and we can’t afford to look away any longer. Here are some of the biggest issues:



### Opportunity cost

Compared to any other generation in history, children growing up in the smartphone era spend less time outdoors, less time playing, less time reading, less time moving and more time scrolling, alone.

### Harmful content

Smartphones mean explicit, violent, and extreme content is only ever a few clicks away, often served up by algorithms when kids aren’t looking for it. Once children see these things, they can never be unseen.

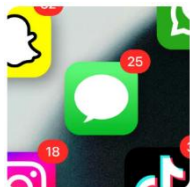


### Mental health

Teenage anxiety, depression and self-harm rates have skyrocketed since 2010 – when kids started getting smartphones. Evidence shows a direct link between early smartphone use and declining mental health.

### Addiction

The tech giants’ business model is simple: the longer kids stay on their platforms, the more money they make. That’s why apps are packed with addictive features – and why kids find it so hard to put them down.



### Attention

The average teen now receives over 200 notifications a day – fragmenting their focus and making it harder to concentrate on schoolwork, hobbies or real-life friendships. Constant distraction is the new normal.

*‘Children and smartphones – what’s the big deal?’ continued on the next page.*

## Children and smartphones – what’s the big deal? (continued)

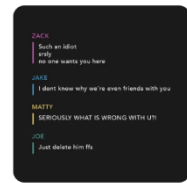


### Family life

Smartphones' addictive design means they can quietly start to take centre stage in family life – causing arguments, battles over screen time, and making it harder to share real, uninterrupted time together.

### Cyberbullying

Arguments and fallouts used to end at the school gate. Now they follow kids home, lingering on their screens day and night – with no safe space to switch off, process or recover.

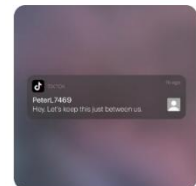


### Sleep

The blue light from screens disrupts melatonin, making it harder to fall asleep, while endless scrolling and late-night notifications keep kids wired when they should be resting.

### Grooming

TikTok, Snapchat, and Roblox aren't just playgrounds for kids – they're hunting grounds for predators. They're often used by sexual predators to target children with their first smartphones



We know that navigating these issues as a parent can feel overwhelming, especially when so many people say, “That’s just the way it is now.” But for the sake of our children, we mustn’t accept that narrative. Cultural change is possible — and it starts with families and schools working together. By taking a shared approach as a school community, we can support one another and give our children the gift of a slower, healthier childhood — one where they can grow, connect and thrive without the pressure of early smartphone use.

We appreciate your support in helping to foster healthier, happier childhoods. Please don’t hesitate to get in touch with any questions.

Warm regards,

Vicki Lonie and Mark Burns  
**Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher**  
 Woodlands Primary School