

Monmouthshire Schools: Smartphone Strategy

Our collective position: we advocate as schools for a smartphone-free childhood for all children in Monmouthshire. We work in collaboration with families, asking them not to provide a smartphone for their child until they are at least 14 years old.

We commit to the following:

1. We will ask families not to provide a smartphone for their child until they are at least 14 years old.
2. We will have robust mobile phone policies that prevent smartphones from being used at school.
3. We will suggest alternatives to smartphones - [simple phones](#).
4. We will promote our collective position throughout the Year 6/7 transition processes, including promotion to Year 5 and 6 parents to avoid 'rite of passage' purchasing of smartphones.
5. We will ask that parents and carers sign the [SFC smartphone pledge](#).
6. We will work to ensure that our curriculum and pedagogy are fully smartphone-free - there should be no requirement for a smartphone in the classroom.
7. We commit to teaching our children about the opportunities and risks of smartphones, social media and the internet through a safe, age-appropriate digital competency curriculum in our schools.

Students spend only around 12% of their time every year at school*, and so a school-only approach to tackling the issues can only ever be a partial solution. This is why a collaborative approach is far more powerful and comprehensive, where we as schools ask that parents and carers do not provide a smartphone for their child.

* 6 hours a day, for 185 days a year, is 1,110 hours at school if the child has 100% attendance. There are 8,760 hours in a calendar year overall.

Rationale: when we give our children access to the whole of the internet in their pocket, we give the whole of the internet access to our children.

Children with smartphones are at risk of being exposed to harmful content, become addicted to the devices, are distracted from their learning, are at risk of grooming and 'sextortion', are vulnerable to cyberbullying and suffer worse mental health.

More details on all of this evidence can be found below, and in more detail [here](#).

Harmful content: smartphones act as a gateway to pornography, violent and extreme content. Often kids don't seek them out but are exposed to them via algorithms and messaging apps. Once seen, these things can never be unseen. 90% of girls and 50% of boys say they're sent explicit content they didn't want to see.

Addiction: tech companies intentionally make apps addictive, because the more time we spend, the more data they harvest, the more money they make. By leveraging dopamine circuits, they trigger brain responses akin to slot machine gambling. 1 in 4 young adults show signs of behavioural addiction to smartphones.

Academic distraction: the average teen receives 237 smartphone notifications a day – one every few minutes – making focusing on schoolwork hard. Studies show that excessive smartphone use has negative impacts on academic performance. Children at schools with effective smartphone bans get GCSE's 1-2 grades higher.

Grooming: sites like TikTok, Snapchat and Roblox are used by sexual predators to target children with their first smartphones, blackmailing them into sharing sexual content. Sextortion is now the fastest growing crime against teens. Since 2022, there has been a 66% rise in 'self generated' sexual abuse imagery of children under 10.

Cyberbullying: disagreements between pupils used to stop at the school gate, but now they follow kids wherever they go, 24/7. Young people who experience cyberbullying are twice as likely to attempt suicide and self-harm. One in six teens report being cyberbullied in the past month, according to the World Health Organisation.

Mental illness: rates of depression, anxiety and suicide in young people have spiked globally since 2010, when children first began getting smartphones. The first generation to grow up with smartphones are now adults – data shows that the younger they got their first smartphone, the worse their mental health is today.

Further reading: [The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt](#)