



**St Mark's C of E Junior School**  
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***Growing together, becoming all we are created to be***

9<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

**RE: A United Commitment to Childhood: The 'Smartphone Free KS1, 2 and 3' Initiative**

We are writing to you as a collective of Cheltenham primary schools who share a deep concern about the growing negative impact of smartphones and the passive use of digital technology on childhood. With government guidance currently stating that it is for individual school leaders to develop a tailored policy on the use of mobile phones, together, we are committing to join the initiative: 'Smartphone Free KS1, 2 and 3', with the shared aim of supporting families and communities to delay the introduction of personal smartphones and smart devices at home until at least Year 10 (age 14-15).

**Why This Matters**

In recent years, we have seen a significant shift in childhood experiences. Children as young as 8 are now regularly using their own smartphones, often with unrestricted access to the internet and social media. While technology has its place, it is becoming increasingly clear that the early and unsupervised use of smart devices is causing:

- Rising levels of anxiety, sleep disruption, and reduced attention spans
- Exposure to inappropriate content and online risks
- A decline in face-to-face social interaction and imaginative play
- Increased pressure to grow up too quickly
- Child brain chemistry altered to the point of appearing similar to ADHD/ASD and children being wrongly referred for assessment
- Higher rates of self-harm and suicide in children, contributing to suicide being the biggest killer of under-35s in the UK today

As educators and caregivers, we are managing an unprecedented level of safeguarding and behaviour issues linked to the use of smart devices outside of school and believe that childhood should be protected, playful, and developmentally appropriate. We want to give our children the space to grow, explore, and connect with the world around them without the pressures and distractions of the digital world too soon.

Through the 'Smartphone Free KS1, 2 and 3' initiative, we are:

- Encouraging families to delay smartphone ownership until at least Year 10
- Promoting play-based, active, and creative childhoods





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- Creating a united front across schools so that no child feels left out or different for not having a smartphone
- Providing support and resources to help families navigate this journey together

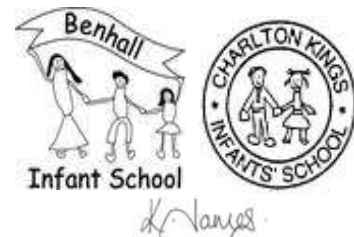
This is not about judging parenting choices or banning appropriate use of technology altogether, for example we all acknowledge the positive role technology can play in supporting some children to be able to access education and the wider world. It is about reclaiming childhood and making a positive, community-wide shift that puts children's wellbeing first.

We intend to achieve this shared intent in a number of ways:

- Each school will review our policies and procedures over the coming months to bring in tighter controls around where and when smart devices can be used. The primary schools are setting out on a journey to become smartphone-free entirely; most Cheltenham secondaries already have (or are moving quickly towards) a policy banning smartphone use in school by taking phones from students or using a 'focus pouch' that prevents the use of the phone during the school day.
- We are committed to helping educate and support you, our parent and carer community, along this journey. Each school will provide regular information on our websites and newsletters aligned to the Smartphone Free KS1, 2 and 3 initiative about this important topic.
- We will partner with wider external organisations to educate and empower our children, staff and families about the dangers of missing out on a play-based childhood and the risks of the unregulated online world. The first of these partnerships sees Bournside School host an information evening in partnership with PAPAAYA, Smartphone Free Childhood, Gloucestershire Police and our local MP on September 23rd at 7p.m. Please see attached details of this event.

We know that change is easier when we do it together. By uniting across schools, we hope to create a strong, supportive culture that empowers families to make informed, confident decisions.

Thank you for standing with us in this important movement. Together, we can give our children the gift of a slower, safer, and more joyful childhood.





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