



Smartphone Free Childhood—Saffron Walden

13th June 2025

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Schools in Saffron Walden are increasingly concerned about the impact of smartphones on pupils. As school leaders from R A Butler Academy, Katherine Semar Academy, St Thomas More Catholic Primary, St Mary's Primary and Saffron Walden County High School, we have now agreed on a unified approach to address this issue.

Smartphones are a big part of life today. Most adults have one. They are great for finding information and staying connected with family and friends.

However, there is now an **alarming amount of evidence and research of the negative effects of smartphones on children**. These include:

- Poor mental health, such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem.
- Issues with cyberbullying, attention, focus and sleep.
- Exposure to dangerous and harmful content, and inappropriate material; and
- Smartphones can be highly addictive, so time spent on a device reduces time spent playing, interacting and developing vital social skills.

Because of this, the Saffron Walden primary schools and the Saffron Walden County High School have come together as we are committed to making our Saffron Walden schools smartphone-free. All schools are changing our current policies on allowing children in primary schools to bring in smartphones.

We are introducing a phased approach to our non-smart phone policy as we want to give families plenty of warning as we understand many children will already have smart phones.

1. Current and continuing policy: Only Y5 and Y6 children are permitted to bring phones to school as they are allowed to go to and from school independently (with permission). Children in Y4 and under are not permitted phones in schools.
2. Current Year 5 and Year 6 will be permitted smartphones as many will already have them. However, please do not allow your child to access social media including WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram until they are the legally allowed. SWCHS reports that these apps cause significant issues with regard to student wellbeing.
3. Current Y4: we would encourage families not to purchase smartphones for children and to consider non-smart phones for when they enter Y5.

4. Current Y3 and younger year groups: the non-smart phone policy will be fully operational. Children in these year groups will not be allowed to bring smart phones into school in Y5 or Y6 . If they do need a phone it should be a non-smart phone.

5. This policy will then follow the children through to SWCHS (from current Year 3 children and below)

Use of social media can cause significant concern in the early years of secondary school. Accessing the internet through a smartphone can pose additional risks than doing so from a more secure network in the home environment. **As such, we are also encouraging all parents and guardians to delay giving a smartphone to your child or allowing access to social media until they are legally allowed to. Please also be mindful of how your child is using other data enabled devices such as tablets or home PCs, as it is not just smartphones that pose a risk.**

Other options to smart-phones:

If you need to contact your child while they travel to and from school, a simple ‘retro’ or non-internet-enabled phone is enough (e.g. Nokia 2660 or 5710). These phones do not have internet connectivity, and they are inexpensive compared to smartphones. There are a variety of retro phones currently on the market – you can find some examples here:

<https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/alternatives> and we will share further information on these in due course. Another option to track where your child is, is to put an air-tag in their school bag.

We are committed to working together with parents to safeguard children and enable them to thrive at school. If you would like to find out more about support for parents who want their children to be smartphone free, do please visit [Smartphone Free Childhood](#). The Smartphone free childhood Saffron Walden team will be holding some community events and information sessions for all parents who attend Saffron Walden schools in the next few months, so please look out for additional information coming out.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Puxley

Executive Headteacher

Katherine Semar Schools

Together with:

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

RA Butler Academy

St Mary’s Church of England Primary School

Saffron Walden County High School

