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# St Nicholas at Wade CEP School

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## Smartphone-Free Policy

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Reviewed by: Taralee Kennedy

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## Vision:



At St Nicholas at Wade we believe in building children’s lives on solid foundations. Inspired by The Wise Builders, we seek to help every child grow in wisdom, resilience, and character before facing the wider digital world.

By remaining a smartphone-free primary school, we protect childhood as a time for learning, play, relationships, and reflection. Just as the wise builder chooses strong foundations before building higher, we prioritise pupils’ emotional wellbeing, social skills, and moral understanding before introducing powerful technologies.

Our approach supports families in delaying smartphones until at least age 14 and social media until age 16, ensuring children are developmentally ready to use technology wisely, safely, and responsibly. Together, we aim to raise confident, compassionate learners whose lives are built on rock – not shaped by pressure, comparison, or distraction.

## Introduction

At St Nicholas at Wade we are committed to supporting children’s wellbeing, learning, and social development. While we do not currently experience issues with mobile phone use, we recognise growing evidence that early access to smartphones and social media can impact concentration, sleep, mental health, and relationships. In an age where digital connectivity is ever-present, we recognise the growing concerns around the impact of smartphone use on young people’s wellbeing, concentration, and social development—both in and beyond the classroom.

As part of our wider wellbeing approach, we actively promote:

- No smartphones until at least age 14
- No social media until at least age 16

This policy supports families by creating a consistent, low-pressure environment where children can learn, play, and socialise without digital distraction.

## **Policy Statement**

- Pupils should not bring smartphones to school.
- If a phone is needed for safety when travelling to or from school, this should be a basic mobile phone (calls and texts only).
- Smart devices (including smartphones, smartwatches with messaging/calling, or internet-enabled devices) are not permitted during the school day.

Our commitment is not to reject technology, but to use it purposefully and at the right time, in the right way. This policy has been developed in consultation with pupils, staff, and families and reflects our shared responsibility to help children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

## **Objectives** (why are we keen to encourage a smart phone free childhood)

### **Protect Childhood and Wellbeing**

- To safeguard children's emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing by reducing exposure to content, pressures, and behaviours that are not developmentally appropriate for primary-aged children.

### **Build Strong Foundations ("The Wise Builders")**

- To prioritise the development of character, resilience, self-regulation, and empathy before children encounter the complexities of smartphones and social media, ensuring their lives are built on solid foundations.

### **Promote Healthy Relationships**

- To encourage face-to-face communication, collaboration, and friendship-building, helping children develop social skills rooted in kindness, respect, and understanding rather than online comparison or validation.

### **Support Focused Learning**

- To minimise distraction and maximise engagement in learning by ensuring children can concentrate fully in lessons, develop sustained attention, and build positive learning habits.

### **Reduce Peer Pressure and Social Comparison**

- To create a shared culture that reduces pressure to own smartphones or participate in social media, allowing children to grow at their own pace without fear of missing out or comparison.

### **Encourage Safe and Responsible Digital Use**

- To delay access until children are more developmentally ready to understand online safety, privacy, consent, and digital responsibility, leading to more informed and ethical technology use in later years.

### **Promote Physical Play and Healthy Habits**

- To support physical activity, creativity, and outdoor play, as well as healthy sleep routines, by reducing screen exposure during key stages of growth and development.

### **Work in Partnership with Families**

- To support parents and carers in making informed choices about technology use, reinforcing consistent messages between home and school regarding healthy digital boundaries.

### **Prepare for the Future, Not Rush It**

- To ensure children enter adolescence with confidence, self-worth, and discernment, ready to engage with smartphones and social media as tools, not as influences that define them.

### **Safeguarding and Online Safety**

This policy is underpinned by the school's commitment to safeguarding all pupils. By becoming a smartphone-free school, we reduce the risk of pupils being exposed to inappropriate content, online bullying, image-sharing, or grooming—either on the school site or during school hours.

The policy aligns with our statutory safeguarding responsibilities under Keeping Children Safe in Education and is consistent with our wider curriculum provision, including:

- Online safety education delivered through computing and PSHE
- Anti-bullying and peer relationship work, including the use of social media
- Digital literacy development, including safe searching and age-appropriate content
- Support for vulnerable pupils, who may be at greater risk of exploitation or online harm

We recognise that the digital world can present both opportunities and risks. This policy helps pupils develop healthier digital habits while ensuring that school remains a safe, focused, and inclusive space.

### **Mobile Phone Agreement**

We recognise that some families may wish their child to carry a mobile phone for safety when travelling to and from school. In line with our smartphone-free policy, this is permitted only under the following conditions:

- The device must not be a smartphone and should have no access to mobile data, internet browsing, or social media. We recommend basic models such as those which can be found here: <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/alternatives>
- The phone must be clearly labelled with the pupil's full name.
- Upon arrival, the phone must be switched off before entering the school grounds and handed in to the office.
- Phones may only be used after school, off-site and away from school entrances.

Please note that mobile phones are not permitted on school trips or residential visits.

A smartphone will only be permitted if required to manage their medical condition effectively such as diabetes.

Pupils found with smartphones or using a mobile phone during the school day will have the device confiscated. Confiscated phones will be held securely by the Senior Leadership Team and returned only to a parent or carer at the end of the day.

## **Parental Agreement**

As part of the new intake process, in our Home School Agreement, we will ask families to reaffirm their support for our commitment to a smartphone-free environment. We believe that a consistent partnership between home and school is essential in promoting safe, focused, and connected learning spaces. By signing the Home School Agreement, families acknowledge the importance of limiting smartphone use during the school day and agree to uphold the expectations set out in this policy.

The section of the Home School Agreement relating specifically to our smartphone policy is included below:

### **Smartphone-Free Commitment**

*I understand that St Nicholas at Wade is a smartphone-free school. If my child needs to bring a phone to school for safety reasons, I will ensure it is a basic, non-smart device with no internet access. I agree that it will be clearly labelled with my child's name, switched off before entering the school premises, and handed to the school office upon arrival. I support the school's stance that smartphones are not permitted on school trips or residential visits, and I understand that any smartphone brought to school will be confiscated and returned at the end of the day.*

## **Supporting pupils at St Nicholas**

We recognise that fostering pupil understanding and ownership of our smartphone-free approach is crucial to ensuring its success. To this end, we will take a proactive, age appropriate, and inclusive approach to educating children about the reasons behind the policy and what it means for them.

## **Clear Communication in Assemblies and Class Discussions**

We will introduce the policy to pupils through assemblies and class-based conversations, using language appropriate to their age and understanding. These sessions will explore the rationale behind the policy, including topics such as online safety, social interaction, and mental well-being. Children will be encouraged to ask questions and contribute their views.

## **Integration into the PSHE Curriculum**

As part of our personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education, we

will explore themes such as digital responsibility, the impact of screen time, and the value of face-to-face communication. These lessons will support children in understanding not just the "what" of the policy, but the "why"—helping them to develop lifelong digital habits.

### **Visible Reminders and Expectations**

Classrooms and shared spaces will display age-appropriate reminders about the school's smartphone expectations. Staff will regularly reinforce the policy in a consistent and supportive manner, helping pupils to internalise the norms and routines associated with device use.

### **Peer Leadership and Role Modelling**

Where appropriate, older pupils will be invited to take part in promoting the policy through pupil leadership roles, such as digital ambassadors or school council representatives. These pupils can help model positive behaviours and act as champions for the school's values.

Through this multi-layered approach, we aim to ensure that all pupils not only understand the smartphone-free policy but feel supported and empowered to thrive within it.