



# Upper Beeding Primary School

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Head Teacher: Mr M Andrews

Friday 9th May 2025

Dear Parents / Carers

## **Smartphone/device Policy: working together to improve pupils' wellbeing**

We are writing to parents and carers regarding our concerns about the potential detrimental impact of smartphones and unfiltered internet access on young people, and setting out the steps we are taking at Upper Beeding Primary to address these. We feel it is important to let you know our position on the topic, so that this can inform the decisions you make as a family. We are aware that this is a long letter, so we have broken it down into key questions to make it easier to read.

### **Background information and definition of 'smart' devices**

As you may have seen in the media, there is a growing movement amongst parents to support a campaign called "Smartphone-Free Childhood". You can find out more by clicking these links:

<https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>

<https://delaysmartphones.org.uk/>

By "smartphones", we refer to phones that are able to access the internet and apps, as opposed to mobile phones (also known as brick/simple/child phones) that can only text and make phone calls and have no internet connection. We feel it is important to let you know our position on the topic, so that this can inform the decisions you make as a family.

The use of smart devices, which includes smartphones and smartwatches, is now a feature of daily life for most adults, and over the last few years the age at which children are given their first smartphone has dropped significantly.

### **Potential negative risks associated with smart devices**

We understand the importance of being able to contact your child as they become more independent, walking to and from school, in order to give them a way to contact you if they need to. Whilst smartphones can be a very helpful piece of technology for adults, they can equally expose children to a number of risks. There is some evidence to suggest that smartphones may:

- be highly addictive, with the lasting effects on young and developing brains being similar to that of gambling
- have been linked to poor mental health, depression and low self-esteem, especially in young teenagers
- expose children to harmful content including pornography, grooming, bullying and material that is not age-appropriate
- reduce attention spans and children's ability to concentrate
- reduce time spent playing (outside), interacting and developing vital communication and social skills

### **What are we doing as a school (including link to survey)?**

Schools, as well as families, have a role in changing how children use smartphones. Currently, our Year 5 and Year 6 children can bring any type of phone into school if they walk on their own. These are given to the class teacher on arrival and back to the child at the end of the day. In consultation with you, we are planning to make Upper Beeding Primary smartphone free for children. This will mean that pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 will only be allowed a phone in school which has a sim card and no internet access capability, i.e. a brick phone. As part of this consultation, please spare 5 minutes to complete the survey using this link

<https://forms.gle/cnmKMjBB5rMwpgPr5> to give us your opinions and thoughts, and about us making these changes from September 2025 or from September 2026. We would appreciate the survey being completed by **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May**. Thank you for your support.



## **Timeline of School Actions**

### **May 2025**

- Send letter stating position of school and asking for parent consultation survey to be completed

### **Summer term 2 2025**

- Analyse data from parent survey
- Communicate findings with parents, Governors, staff and children
- Review policy in line with feedback from Parent survey

September 2025 or September 2026 (depending on parent survey)

- Implement policy that smart phones/devices will no longer be allowed on school grounds. If a child brings a smart phone on to the school site, it will be held in the school office until a parent collects it at the end of the day.

### **What are other schools in the area doing?**

For now, we continue to encourage all parents to delay giving children a smartphone until they reach the age of at least 14, opting instead for a text/call phone alternative. A growing number of parents across the country are choosing to do this. There is widespread support from schools across West Sussex and I am liaising with locality schools about smartphone use. We believe we can all work together across the country to change the 'normal' age that children are given smartphones. However, for this to be successful, it relies on you, our children's parents and families, resisting the pressure from your children and their peers, and holding back on providing smartphones until the age of 14.

### **What can families do at home?**

In order to have these conversations at home and set expectations with your children, it is useful for you to know the school's position, and that of many other families in the local area. We also want to reassure you that there is a growing number of children with phones that do not have smart capability, where families have already begun to consider and purchase alternatives.

If your child already has a smartphone, parental control options are available which enable you to switch off or limit the phones capabilities, e.g. you can make certain social media apps or internet search functions inaccessible. If you are unsure how to do this, click the following link for further information -

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/smartphones-and-other-devices/> - or contact the school for support.

### **What is the school's current policy?**

In school, the current procedure is that children in Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 & 6) may bring their mobile phone to school, but this should only be the case if they will be walking to or from school alone.

Additionally:

- Mobile phones must be turned off before entering school grounds
- The child should give their mobile phone to their class teacher at the beginning of the school day

We also stipulate that should a child breach these rules, their mobile phone will be confiscated and placed in the school office. The phone will not be returned to the child, but must be collected by a parent or carer during school opening hours. The same applies to smartwatches and other smart devices, particularly those with a camera or recording capabilities.

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](#)

Here is the link to our survey once again to collect your thoughts and opinions around children and smartphone use <https://forms.gle/cnmKMjBB5rMwpgPr5>

Best wishes,  
Mr Andrews  
Headteacher

