



Dear Parent / Carer,

As of **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024**, changes to our Mobile Phone and Electronic Devices policy will come into effect to support the well-being, mental health, safeguarding, and academic achievement of all children that attend the school. Our vision is to become a mobile phone and electronic devices free school. To achieve this vision, we require your support with the following:

- Encouraging your child to leave their mobile phone/smartphone/smartwatch at home, or
- Using screen time restrictions so that your child is unable to access their mobile phone/smartphone during the school day (see attached guidance)

If you decide as a family that you want your child to travel to and from school with their mobile phone/smartphone, please be aware that we will be strictly enforcing that mobile phones/smartphones/smart watches are turned off and stored safely in bags before entering the school premises through the main gate.

### **Why have you modified your policy?**

Research by Ofcom (April, 2024) has found that 95% of those aged between 12 and 15 own a smartphone. Whilst there are many social and educational benefits to children having access to a smartphone, e.g. accessing Seneca Learning, Mathswatch, Tassomai, research suggests that nearly 25% of children and young people use their smartphones in a way that is consistent with a behavioural addiction.

Recent research has suggested that:

#### **UK Parliament (House of Commons, 2024)<sup>1</sup>**

- 79% of children had encountered violent pornography before the age of 18, with the average age that children first see pornography as being 13 years old.
- Images posted online can have a negative impact on children and young people's perception of themselves.
- 81% of girls, aged 7–21 have experienced some form of threatening or upsetting behaviour online.
- One in five children (19%) aged 10–15 experienced at least one type of bullying behaviour online, and out of them, around three-quarters (72%) said they experienced at least some of it at school or during school time.
- Access to smartphones disrupts pupils learning in school to the extent that it can take up to 20 minutes to refocus on learning after browsing the internet or reading social media notifications.
- There is an association between the increase in screen time and declining well-being and mental health of children.
- Increased risk of encountering online harms while using screens. Examples of online harms include cyberbullying, racism, misogynistic abuse, pornography, and material promoting violence and self-harm.

□ **ParentKind (March, 2024)<sup>2</sup>**

- 58% of parents support the idea of introducing a ban on smartphones for under 16s.

□ **Policy Exchange<sup>3</sup>**

- Children at schools with an effective ban on mobile phones achieved GCSE results that were 1 – 2 grades higher compared to children at schools with laxer policies.

**What if I need to contact my child?**

Please contact the school and our reception staff will pass a message on to them. If your child needs to contact you, they will be able to do so via reception at break, lunch or at the end of the school day.

**What will be the sanction if my child is seen with their phone?**

**Misuse 1** – The phone will be confiscated and placed in a labelled wallet and placed in the school safe. Priority 1 or 2 parents or carers will be notified to come and collect the phone from reception between 2.45 and 3.45pm on the day of the phone being confiscated.

**Misuse 2** – As for Misuse 1 but the phone will then be kept overnight and can be collected the following day by a priority 1 or 2 parent or carer. If confiscation occurs on a Friday, the phone can be collected the following Monday.

**Misuse 3** – Parent/carers will be invited to meet with a member of the pastoral team to create a social contract which will involve the mobile phone being handed in at the start of the school day by the child and collected between 2.45 and 3.45pm by a priority 1 or 2 parent or carer.

**What if I am unable to collect my child's phone?**

We would keep the phone in our safe until a time when it is convenient for you to collect it from reception.

**What if my child refuses to hand in their mobile phone?**

They will continue their learning in our RR Room until they either hand the phone in or a parent/carers can arrive in the school to have a restorative conversation with a member of the pastoral team. As a last resort we will issue a one-day suspension if your child refuses to hand in their phone.

**Do you have any information on restricting screen time on smartphones?**

Attached is a useful guide for parents / carers on restricting screen time and checking privacy settings to keep your child safe online.

**I find it hard to separate my child from their device, can you help?**

We can work with you to put in place plans to avoid overuse and misuse and will support you in ensuring your child is meeting the school expectations. We will also be educating pupils on how to use devices responsibly.

**Will there be an opportunity to discuss this initiative with the school?**

There will be an opportunity to attend a meeting with members of the Senior Leadership Team on Tuesday 3rd September 2024 from 4.30 to 5.30pm. Please e-mail [contact@suthersschool.co.uk](mailto:contact@suthersschool.co.uk) to confirm if you would like to attend the meeting.

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As a parent of two teenage sons, I believe this is an initiative that when embraced by us all as a community will contribute to improving the well-being, mental health, safeguarding, and academic performance of your child(ren).

Kind Regards,

James Griffiths  
**Deputy Head Teacher**

### **References**

- 1) <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/45128/documents/223543/default/>
- 2) <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/assets/resources/Parent-poll-on-smartphones-March-2024.pdf>
- 3) <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Disconnect.pdf>

