



# Hitchin Primary Headteachers' Consortium

22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you may be aware, there is an initiative across our community: the Smartphone-Free Parent Pact for primary-aged children. This encourages families to consider alternatives to smartphones for young children, such as a basic app free cell phone, and to join a community-wide effort to support healthy, balanced childhoods in today's digital world.

**Why?** A smartphone-free childhood allows children to focus more deeply, engage with peers face-to-face, and cultivate curiosity and creativity in a way that screens often cannot. Research increasingly highlights that smartphone use among young children can be linked to a range of issues affecting their wellbeing, learning, and development. Studies by the UK's Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) have raised concerns about prolonged screen time, including its potential to disrupt sleep patterns, reduce physical activity, and impact children's mental health. Those spending more than two hours per day on screens, including smartphones, are more likely to experience mood changes, lower self-esteem, and even symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Educationally, children in primary school benefit most from hands-on, interactive learning and active play. Findings from the National Literacy Trust indicate that limiting screen exposure impacts positively on literacy skills, communication, and attention span - all critical during these primary school years.

**What?** Every family's needs are different, and decisions around technology use can feel challenging. The Smartphone-Free Pact is a flexible, supportive commitment rather than a strict set of rules. Those who sign up, join others to encourage limited, careful smartphone access until secondary school. The key aspects of the pact are as follows:

- Delay smartphone ownership for primary school-aged children.
- Promote screen-free play and social interaction, fostering real-world connections and physical activity.
- Encourage screen use with purpose, such as for learning or as a family activity, rather than as an unstructured or unsupervised pastime.

Modern technology is a valuable part of life, and offers many positive resources. This pact is about striking a balance—giving children the best chance to develop without the distractions, dependency, and pressures that early smartphone use may bring.

**How?** To make it easy to join the Smartphone-Free Parent Pact, there is an easy to complete, online sign-up form [Smartphone Free Childhood Sign the Parent Pact](#)

Parents are in control of which technologies they wish their child to have access to. If this is an initiative you would like to explore further, please contact your child's school and they can coordinate a time and place for parents to meet. By working together, a supportive and understanding commitment to providing the right technology at the right time can be established. Thank you for considering this step towards navigating technology positively for the benefit of the children in our family of schools.

Warm regards, Hitchin Primary Headteachers