



HOOK JUNIOR SCHOOL

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12 December 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

I wish to update you on an important direction we are taking as a school in response to growing concerns about the impact of smartphones on children's wellbeing, safety and social development.

Over recent months, Hook Junior School has been actively exploring how we can best support families in navigating the challenges associated with children's access to smartphones. We joined the Smartphone-Free Childhood initiative in the summer term of 2025, and many of you expressed your support for this movement at the summer fair. I have also met with local Headteachers to discuss how we can reduce the social pressure around phone ownership, provide clearer boundaries, and work together to protect children's emotional health.

Why becoming a smartphone free school matters

The national picture continues to raise concern:

- The average 12-year-old in the UK now spends nearly 30 hours a week on their smartphone.
- Early smartphone ownership is linked to poorer mental-health outcomes.
- Around 25% of children aged 5–7 already have their own device.

These trends mirror the concerns many of you have raised in conversations with staff and through our recent parent survey. Of the 343 responses we received, there was overwhelming support for taking a stronger and more consistent approach to phone use in school.

Parents told us they were particularly worried about:

- Anxiety, low self-esteem and other mental-health effects associated with early smartphone use.
- Social pressure and “keeping up with friends”, especially where some children have smartphones and others do not.
- Reduced face-to-face interaction, including on the journey to and from school.
- Safeguarding issues around unsupervised access to phones, whether online or on school premises.

Many parents also shared that they would prefer to delay smartphone ownership until secondary school but found this difficult when other children were already bringing devices into school.

Alongside this, we are continuing to see international concern about children's digital safety. Australia has recently announced a ban on access to social-media accounts for under-16s, recognising the growing evidence of harm and the need for stronger protections. This global

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2017 and 2023

shift reinforces the importance of schools and families working together to create safer digital habits for younger children.

Our next steps

Parents already support the school's expectation that any phones brought in are handed to the school office for safekeeping during the day. A recent check showed that only 24 children across all year groups bring a phone to school—and only three of these are non-smartphones.

After careful review and consultation with governors, we will be moving towards a smartphone-free school across all year groups from September 2025. This will give families time to transition from smartphones to non-smart devices where needed.

From September 2026:

- Children will not be permitted to bring smartphones onto the school site.
- Children may bring non-smart “brick” phones, handed in for safekeeping on arrival as is currently the case.
- Smart watches or devices capable of messaging, calls, photos or recordings will remain prohibited.

While school phone use has always been restricted, we believe a full ban on smartphones will provide clarity, reduce social pressure and better support pupils' wellbeing and safety.

Supporting independence and safety

We fully appreciate that for some families, giving a child a phone has been a safety measure as they gain independence in Year 5 or Year 6. We want to support you through this transition, and we have gathered a list of practical alternatives:

- Using a video-enabled doorbell to confirm arrival and departure.
- Encouraging children to walk with a group or meet at a set location.
- Providing a simple non-smart “brick phone” for use at home, with a clear “text by...” agreement.
- Teaching children safety messages such as “Clever Never Goes”.
- Arranging a buddy system with another trusted adult.
- Giving children a small ID card with emergency contacts.

We will continue to work with families to strengthen children's independence without relying on smartphone technology.

A shared commitment

At the heart of this work is our desire to protect children's social and emotional wellbeing, reduce unnecessary pressures, and ensure that school remains a place where they can connect, play and learn free from distractions.

We also encourage families to consider signing the national Parent Pact, which many of you have already committed to, supporting a shared decision to delay smartphone ownership.

We have developed a policy to support this whole-school approach, which—as with all policies—will be regularly reviewed and refined.

We look forward to working with you to help our children develop a healthy, balanced relationship with technology now and as they move into secondary school.

Yours sincerely,

Miss L Powell

Headteacher