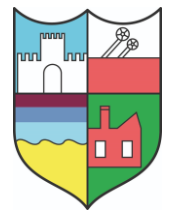




Ellington Primary School



12th June 2026

Smart Phones and Smart Watches

Dear Parents/Carers,

I would like to inform you that from September 2026, Ellington will be a smart phone (and watch) free school.

This decision has been made by staff and governors in light of continuing safeguarding concerns in recent years.

This is also in line with The Department for Education (2026) which states that **all schools should be smart phone-free environments.**

This aligns with behaviour guidance and safeguarding expectations, reinforcing that phones are not appropriate for the primary school day.

Historically, children in Years 5 and 6 have been able to bring a phone with them into school and hand this in to their class teacher when entering school. However, we have found the introduction of mobile phones in Year 5 has led to continuing issues in and outside of school.

Therefore, from September 2026, no children will be able to bring a smart phone or smart watch into school.

If a child does bring in a smart phone/watch, this will be kept in the school office and will need to be collected by an adult.

Why we are banning smart phones?

Safeguarding – Our number one priority in school is always safeguarding. We believe that children using smartphones are more at risk of harm. WhatsApp and TikTok are two of most prominent safeguarding concerns on smart phones.

Safeguarding Concerns: WhatsApp

1. Group-chat bullying and exclusion

WhatsApp groups can quickly become spaces for unkind comments, ganging-up, or excluding a child from the group — often happening late at night when emotions run high.

2. Exposure to inappropriate content

Children can be sent images, videos or messages they are not emotionally ready for. WhatsApp has **no content filtering**, so anything shared in a group is instantly visible.

3. Pressure to respond and constant notifications

Primary pupils struggle with boundaries. Group chats can run late into the evening, causing anxiety, sleep disruption and emotional overload.

4. Sharing personal information

Children may share their phone number, location, photos or voice notes without understanding the risks or permanence.



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5. Forwarding messages and accidental harm

WhatsApp makes it easy to forward messages or screenshots, which can escalate conflicts or spread private information.

6. Age-inappropriate use

WhatsApp's minimum age is **16**.

Safeguarding Concerns: TikTok

1. Exposure to harmful or adult content

TikTok's algorithm can surface inappropriate videos — violence, sexualised content, swearing, risky challenges — even without searching for them.

2. Contact from strangers

TikTok allows comments, DMs (depending on settings), and interactions from unknown users. Children may not recognise grooming behaviours or manipulative praise.

3. Pressure to create and perform

Children may feel pushed to copy trends, dance routines or challenges that are unsafe, sexualised or beyond their emotional maturity.

4. Data and privacy risks

Posting videos can reveal a child's school uniform, home environment, routines or location. Even "private" accounts can leak content through screenshots or re-uploads.

5. Online comparison and self-esteem issues

TikTok's fast-paced, appearance-focused content can affect body image, confidence and emotional wellbeing — especially in younger children.

6. Age-inappropriate use

TikTok's minimum age is **13**, but the platform is designed for older teens and adults. Primary pupils lack the developmental maturity to navigate it safely

Impact in School

Impacting school work – In recent years, issues stemming from smart phones have frequently caused disturbances in school. This has led to learning time being wasted and staff spending more and more time dealing with problems arising from smart phones.

Impacting friendships – We all know that children will 'fall out' from time to time and this is part of growing up. However, we have found that smart phones have increased these instances tenfold. WhatsApp groups being the main culprit in this.

Smartphone Free Childhood

Smartphone Free Childhood is a rapidly growing UK movement uniting parents, schools and communities to delay children's access to smartphones and social media, aiming to protect childhood from the pressures and harms of the digital world.

What is the Smartphone Free Childhood campaign?

Smartphone Free Childhood (SFC) is a UK-based grassroots movement launched in 2024 that encourages families to delay giving children smartphones, typically until age 14, and to delay access to social media until age 16. It has rapidly grown into a national and international campaign with hundreds of thousands of parents involved.



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1. A fast-growing parent-led movement

SFC began as a small WhatsApp group created by two parents in Suffolk and went viral in early 2024. It now has over 140,000 parents from 13,500 schools signed up to its pact, with members in more than 60 countries.

2. The core message: delay smartphones

The campaign asks parents to sign a voluntary pact promising not to give their child a smartphone before age 14. It focuses on cultural change, not legislation, and aims to reduce peer pressure by encouraging whole communities to delay together.

3. Why it exists: rising concern about childhood and tech

The movement grew in response to increasing evidence and public concern about the impact of smartphones on children's mental health, attention, sleep, social development and exposure to harmful content. This concern was amplified by books like *The Anxious Generation* and documentaries such as *Swiped*.

4. A wider cultural shift

The campaign has gained support from public figures, MPs, health professionals and educators. It has influenced school policies and contributed to a broader national conversation about children's digital wellbeing

Some questions we think you may have:

Q – Why now?

A – This isn't a decision we have taken lightly. However, we have had some serious incidents occur this academic year due to smartphones. In previous years, some children in Year 4 have been given smartphones in preparation for Year 5. By informing you now, we hope this may allow you to speak to your child and delay buying them a smart phone.

Q – My child already has a smart phone, so how will this help them?

A – We don't believe by stopping smart phones coming into school that we will solve all issues; however, we believe that this is a step in the right direction and will hopefully limit the use of smart phones.

Q - How can my child contact me if they are walking home from school?

A - 'Brick phones' will be permitted, but would still need to be handed in to class teachers when entering school. Example: [Nokia 105](#)

Q – I like to check my child's location when they leave school, how can I do this?

A – Your child could have an air tag in their bag/coat.

If you have any questions regarding this, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Best Wishes,

Mr K. Hodgson
Headteacher