



Earl Sterndale C of E Primary School

# Smartphone-Free Statement

## Introduction

We are committed to providing a safe, focused, and inclusive learning environment for all our pupils. As part of this commitment, we are introducing a Smartphone-Free School Policy, effective from March 2026. This policy reflects our belief that primary-aged children benefit most from real-life social interactions, hands-on learning, and time away from digital distractions. By limiting the presence of smartphones and internet-enabled devices on school grounds, we aim to support children's emotional development, protect their wellbeing, and foster a stronger sense of community within our school. We ask for the support of parents and carers in helping us uphold this important approach.

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## Smartphone Ban

- From March 2026, pupils in Years 5–6 may bring brick phones into school, by prior arrangement with parents, if considered necessary (for example, where a child walks home independently).
- Pupils in Years R–4 are not permitted to bring mobile phones of any kind.
- Any phone brought into school must be handed in upon arrival. It will be stored securely by staff and returned to the pupil at the end of the school day. Phones must remain switched off while on school premises.
- If a child requires a smartphone for medical reasons, this must be discussed with the Headteacher in advance.

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## Rationale

We do not support children owning smartphones for the following reasons:

- They reduce opportunities for the development of critical thinking and emotional regulation skills.
- They limit real-life social interactions.
- They pose privacy and online safety risks.

Additional principles:

- We promote a smartphone-free environment to encourage face-to-face interaction and minimise distractions during school hours, including school trips and residential visits.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to support this policy by ensuring children do not bring smartphones to school.
- In the event a pupil brings a smartphone to school, reasonable steps will be taken to address any concerns or risks.

## Risks Associated with Smartphone Use

Smartphones offer advanced features, including internet access and social media, which present a number of risks:

- **Cyberbullying** – Smartphones can facilitate harassment, making it harder for pupils to escape bullying.
  - **Exposure to inappropriate content** – Unfiltered internet access may expose children to unsuitable material.
  - **Mental health concerns** – Excessive use has been linked to increased anxiety and low mood.
  - **Distraction from learning** – Smartphones can significantly disrupt concentration and classroom engagement.
  - **Privacy and security risks** – Children may not understand how to protect personal information, increasing vulnerability.
  - **Self-image and social pressure** – The culture of selfies and online comparison can negatively affect confidence and self-worth.
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## Confiscation and Sanctions

- The school reserves the right to apply sanctions for breaches of the mobile phone policy, including confiscation and, where appropriate, suspension.
  - Any smartphone or internet-enabled device found on school premises will be confiscated and returned **only** to a parent or carer.
  - Staff are protected from liability when confiscating items, provided they act lawfully and proportionately.
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## Pupil Tracking Devices

For school trips and off-site visits, we do **not** allow the use of tracking or GPS devices for individual children. Allowing such devices increases safeguarding risks for all children involved and conflicts with our child protection policy.

We do not permit children to wear or carry trackers or electronic tags for location monitoring while at school.

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## What Is a Brick Phone?

A brick phone (also known as a dumbphone or feature phone) is a basic mobile device that primarily offers call and text messaging functions. Unlike smartphones, brick phones do not provide internet access, apps, or advanced operating systems. They are simpler, more secure, and less likely to distract pupils.