



Elmtree Echo Special Edition

Safeguarding #5



Respect - Ambitious - Curious - Resilient - Inclusive



Dear Parents and Carers,

At Elmtree Infant and Nursery School, our priority is to safeguard childhood and ensure that every child can learn, play and grow in an environment that supports their wellbeing. As part of this commitment, I am writing to let you know that we are proud to be part of the *Smartphone Free Childhood* initiative alongside our partner schools across the local consortia.

You may already know that at Elmtree we do not permit children aged 3–7 to bring mobile phones into school. This has always reflected our belief that young children learn best through direct interaction, imaginative play, communication and hands-on experiences. By keeping our school environment phone-free, we protect these precious opportunities. You will be aware of our, 'On site? Out of sight!' approach for adults, whereby we ask all adults entering Elmtree to keep their phones out of site of the children because we want to promote oracy, communication and language, between the children and their grown-ups.

The wider initiative—outlined in the attached consortia letter—brings together local infant, primary and secondary schools to create a consistent, community-wide approach to smartphone use. Schools across Chesham, Amersham, Great Missenden, The Chalfont's, Gerrards Cross and Denham have committed to working collaboratively to safeguard children's wellbeing and reduce the pressures and risks associated with early smartphone and social media use.

Although the new policy has the greatest practical impact on older children, we fully support its aims. Childhood is changing rapidly, and research continues to highlight the effects that early exposure to smartphones can have on attention, sleep, social development and emotional health. By taking a united approach as a group of schools, we hope to give families confidence, reduce the social pressure to introduce devices too early, and protect the time our children need for friendships, curiosity and real-world play.

As your child starts their educational journey with us, we want them to enjoy a school experience that is calm, nurturing and focused entirely on learning and relationships. Being part of Smartphone Free Childhood aligns closely with our values and reinforces our continued commitment to safeguarding the children in our care.

Please read the attached consortia letter as it may affect older siblings who attend surrounding schools.

If you have any questions about our own school policy or about the wider consortium approach, please do not hesitate to speak with us—we are always happy to help.

Thank you, as always, for your support.



Re: Smartphone policy across schools
in Chesham, Amersham, Great Missenden, The Chalfonts, Gerrards Cross and Denham

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are writing to you as a group of schools across Chesham, Amersham, Great Missenden, The Chalfonts, Gerrards Cross and Denham to explain a shared approach to smartphone use.

Our policy from next year

Primary schools

Primary school children will not be allowed to bring **smartphones or smart watches onto school premises**.

Secondary schools

From **September 2026**, **new cohorts of pupils entering Year 7** at the secondary schools listed below will **not be permitted to bring smartphones or smart watches onto school premises**. They will be allowed to bring a simple non-internet enabled phone.

The intent is that this policy will apply **throughout their time in Years 7–11** so that over time smartphones will be phased out of secondary schools before Year 12.

Schools will apply this policy with sensitivity, making appropriate individual exceptions where a device is required for medical or health needs, such as type 1 diabetes.

Each school will be responsible for implementing this policy and will communicate practical arrangements directly with parents. For some schools, this policy reflects or builds on existing practice.

Why are we taking this step?

While smartphones can be useful tools for adults, there is increasing evidence that early smartphone use can negatively affect children's wellbeing and mental health, and introduce significant safeguarding risks. These include impaired attention and concentration, sleep disruption, anxiety and depression, online bullying, exposure to harmful and content and dangerous individuals, and greater social isolation.

We want children and young people to prioritise **learning, friendships and in-person social interaction**, and to benefit from the stronger social skills, empathy and sense of belonging that come from real-world connection.

Schools that have already removed smartphones report calmer learning environments, improved focus and fewer safeguarding incidents. However, much of children's smartphone use takes place outside school, which is why parental support is essential.

Supporting families

Alongside this policy, we encourage parents - if they have not already done so - to **delay giving children a smartphone until at least the end of Year 9**, and to **delay access to social media until age 16**.

If a child needs a device for safety reasons, such as travelling independently, we recommend a **basic phone without internet access**.

We know many parents would prefer to avoid giving smartphones to children aged 11–13 but feel under pressure to do so. A clear, consistent approach across schools helps reset expectations and supports families to make confident, informed decisions.

What happens next?

Your child’s school will share further details of how this policy will operate locally. We hope you will support us as we work together to ensure children can grow up **happy, healthy and free to enjoy childhood for as long as possible**.

Signed by

6 Secondary Schools



Amersham School,
Amersham



The Chalfonts Community College, Chalfont
St Peter



Dr Challoner's Grammar School, Amersham



Chesham Grammar School, Chesham



The Misbourne School, Great
Missenden



Thorpe House School, Ger-
rards Cross

39 Primary Schools



Brushwood Junior School, Chesham



Chalfont St. Giles Infant & Nursery, Chalfont
St Giles



Chalfont St. Giles Junior School, Chalfont St
Giles



Chartridge Combined School, Chesham



Chesham Bois Church of England School,
Chesham Bois



Chesham Preparatory School, Chesham



Chestnut Lane School, Amersham



Coleshill CofE Infant School, Amersham



Curzon CofE Combined School, Amersham



Denham Village School, Denham Green



Elangeni School, Amersham



Elmtree Infant and Nursery School, Chesham



Gateway School, Great Missenden



Gayhurst School, Gerrards Cross



Great Missenden CofE Combined School, Great Missenden



Hawridge and Cholesbury CofE School, Chesham



Heatherton School, Amersham



Hyde Heath Infant School, Hyde Heath



Ivingswood Academy, Chesham



Lee Common Church of England School, Lee Common



Ley Hill School, Chesham



Little Chalfont Primary School, Little Chalfont



Little Kingshill Combined School, Great Missenden



Little Missenden CofE School, Amersham



Maltman's Green School, Gerrards Cross



Newtown School, Chesham



Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Amersham












PRESTWOOD VILLAGE SCHOOLS



PRESTWOOD VILLAGE SCHOOLS



ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY

<p>Prestwood Infant School, Prestwood</p>	<p>Prestwood Junior School, Prestwood</p>	<p>St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Gerrards Cross</p>
<p></p> <p>St Mary's CofE Primary School, Amersham, Amersham</p>	<p></p> <p>St Mary's School, Gerrards Cross, Gerrards Cross</p>	<p></p> <p>St. George's CofE Infant School, Amersham</p>
<p></p> <p>The Beacon School, Amersham</p>	<p></p> <p>The Gerrards Cross CofE School, Gerrards Cross</p>	<p></p> <p>Thomas Harding Junior School, Chesham</p>
<p></p> <p>Thorpe House School, Gerrards Cross</p>	<p></p> <p>Waterside Primary Academy, Chesham</p>	<p></p> <p>Woodside Junior School, Amersham</p>

For more information and resources please visit:

<https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/> <https://delaysmartphones.org.uk/> <https://healthprofessionalsforsaferscreens.org/>

On Site, Out of Sight: Parent phones



At Elmtree Infant and Nursery School, we are committed to fostering a safe, engaged, and connected school community. That's why we have an initiative we call: **"On Site, Out of Sight."**

We kindly ask all parents and carers to **keep their phones and devices tucked away** while on the school site, including during drop-off and pick-up times.

Why?

Promoting a smartphone-free alternative for children

As a school, we will be actively encouraging families to delay smartphone use for their children, and parents to support this. By keeping our own devices out of sight, we reinforce this message and set a positive example.

Encouraging conversations between parents and children

The journey to and from school is a valuable time to connect. A simple chat about the day ahead (or the day just gone) helps build strong relationships and gives children a sense of belonging and security.

Safeguarding our school environment

A phone-free school site ensures that adults are alert, engaged, and aware of what is happening around them, helping to maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all children.

Road safety matters

We also encourage parents to keep their phones away on the journey to and from school. Walking or driving, while distracted by a screen, can be a risk, especially near busy roads. Being present and aware helps keep everyone safe. Please remember it is illegal to use a mobile device whilst driving.

How You Can Help

When you arrive at school, please **put your phone away**. Use this time to chat with your child and others around you. Stay alert and aware of your surroundings, both on-site and on the journey home.

This small change can have a big impact on our children's well-being and safety. Thank you for your support in making our school a more present, engaged, and phone-free space.

Let's lead by example and show our children that **people come before screens!**

Look out for our parent forum coming soon where we will be discussing Smartphone-Free Childhood.

SMARTPHONES- THINK PIECE



A teacher was marking her pupils' homework.

Meanwhile, her husband was walking around the house, glued to his smartphone, immersed in his favourite game.

When she got to the last piece of homework, the teacher quietly began to cry.

Her husband noticed and asked:

— What happened?

She replied:

— Yesterday, I gave my pupils a writing assignment: 'MY WISH.'

The husband said:

— Okay, but why are you crying?

Holding back tears, the wife answered:

— While marking the last piece, I couldn't help but cry.

Curious, the husband asked:

— What was written that was so emotional?

The wife began to read:

My wish is to become a smartphone.

My parents love their smartphone very much.

They take care of their smartphone so well that sometimes they forget to take care of me.

When my dad comes home tired from work, he has time for his smartphone, but not for me.

When my parents are doing something important and the phone rings, they answer it immediately

—but they don't do the same with me, even when I'm crying.

They play with their phones, but not with me.

When they're talking to someone on the phone, they don't listen to me, even when I'm saying something important.

So, my wish is to become a smartphone.

After hearing those words, the husband was deeply moved and asked:

- Who wrote that?

The wife, with teary eyes, replied:

— OUR SON.

Remember: Electronic devices are helpful, but they are meant to make our lives easier- not to replace love for our family and the people we care about. Children see and feel everything happening around them. Their experiences shape their minds and leave marks that last a lifetime. You can help by joining our



Elmtree Pledge: SMARTPHONES, on site, out of sight

HOW TO DELAY SMARTPHONES WITHOUT DAILY BATTLES

Decide your line *early*



It's easier to hold a boundary you decided before the pressure started.

Don't debate it every week

A calm, repeated answer works better than endless negotiation.



Find at least *one other family*

It's much easier when they're not the only one.

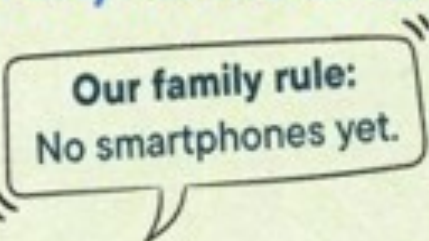


Tell them the plan *in advance*

Children cope better when they've known the family rule for years.

Blame the family rule, *not the child*

Our family rule:
No smartphones yet.



Keep the boundary *calm & boring*

Consistency works better than big arguments.

Don't make smartphones a *reward*



Turning it into a prize only makes it more powerful.

Offer *independence* in other ways

Trust them to have real world experiences alone.

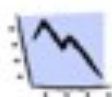


Remember the *pressure passes*

Once the boundary is clear, the urgency often fades.



Kids and smartphones – what's the big deal?



Opportunity cost

More scrolling means less time for play, movement, reading and real-life connection – the building blocks of a healthy childhood.



Harmful content

Extreme, explicit content is just a click away – often served by algorithms, even when kids aren't looking for it.



Mental health

Since smartphones became widespread, teen anxiety, depression and self-harm have surged. Early use is linked to poorer mental health.



Addiction

Apps are designed to hook kids in. The longer they scroll, the more money tech companies make – at any cost.



Attention

Smartphones hijack focus. Constant pings and notifications make it harder for kids to concentrate, learn, and enjoy deep focus.



Family life

Phones can quietly dominate home life – fuelling arguments, draining attention, and crowding out real connection between parents and kids.



Cyberbullying

Fallouts don't end at school anymore. They follow kids home, with no off switch and nowhere to escape the pressure.



Sleep

Blue light and late-night scrolling disrupt rest and recovery – leaving kids wired, overtired, and struggling to function the next day.



Grooming

Predators target kids on popular apps like TikTok and Snapchat – especially when they first get unsupervised smartphone access.

Our safeguarding team

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. Governing boards must also ensure that the school designates an appropriate senior member of staff to take lead responsibility for child protection.

Key aspects of the 'Designated Safeguarding Lead' (DSL) role include

- Making sure all staff are aware how to raise safeguarding concerns
- Ensuring all staff understand the symptoms of child abuse and neglect
- Referring any concerns to children's social care
- Monitoring children who are the subject of child protection or child in need plans
- Maintaining accurate and secure child protection records
- Raising awareness of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures, and ensuring they are implemented and reviewed regularly

As a school, we have a team of trained and experienced DSLs who work together to support these functions. They form our 'Safeguarding Team'.



Mrs Ohene
Headteacher

**Designated Safeguarding
Lead**



Mrs Dowling
Deputy Headteacher

**Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead**



Miss Gettings
KS1 Leader

**Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead**



Mrs Garman
Family Liaison Officer

**Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead**



Mrs Martin
**ODBST
Safeguarding Lead**