



BERKHAMSTED

— 1541 —

Frequently-asked Questions on Phones at Berkhamsted

1. Why has the school implemented a smartphone-free policy?

- To keep children safe
- To maximise the prospects of children being well and doing well
- To increase face-to-face socialisation between pupils
- Because it is what the vast majority of parents said they wanted the school to do
- To make it easier for parents to say no to requests to smartphones which start “but **all** my friends have one”
- Because we act on the research of psychologists, the government and academics who recommend this approach (see the work of Jonathan Haidt in *The Anxious Generation*, click [here](#) for a summary of data from his book, [here](#) for research by the London School of Economics and [here](#) and [here](#) for government recommendations. Parents may also be interested in the smartphone-free movement [here](#).

2. What is the smartphone-free policy?

- Pupils are not allowed to use a phone during school hours in school until the 6th Form.
- From September 2024, pupils in Y7-11 have to lock phones in a Yondr pouch at 08:30 until 16:20. This process is overseen by staff and checks are carried out on occasion during the day as well.
- From September 2024, no pupil in Y6 or below will be allowed to bring a smartphone onto the school site. Pupils in Y5 or Y6 will be able to bring non-smart phones onto the school site and leave it at reception.
- From September 2025, pupils in Y7 will not be allowed to bring a smartphone onto the school site and parents are advised not to buy their child a smartphone. This smartphone-free routine will follow the pupils up through the school until at least the end of Year 9 (when all pupils are likely to be 14).
- From September 2026, Y7 & 8 will not be allowed to bring a smartphone onto the school site.
- From September 2027, Y7, 8 & 9 will not be allowed to bring a smartphone onto the school site.

3. Which devices are covered under this policy?

- Phones and smartphones

4. Do non-smartphones have to be locked away in Yondr pouches in the senior schools? If so, why?

- Yes, because non-smart phones can still detract from pupils learning, face-to-face socialisation and making the most of the holistic educational opportunities.

5. How will the school enforce this policy?

- Staff supervise pupils putting their phones in Yondr pouches in the mornings. Pupils can unlock the Yondr pouches at the end of the day (there is no access to the Yondr key points during the day). Random checks also take place from time to time. Sanctions and restorative/educational approaches are used for those who do not follow the rules. Repeatedly not following the rules would lead to sanctions escalating.

6. Where should pupils store their smartphones during school hours?

- They keep their phones with them, but they are switched off in Yondr pouches.

7. What if my child needs to contact me during the day?

- They can send an email in breaktime or lunchtime or they can go to reception and ask to make a phone call. We encourage pupils to develop their independence and not to contact their parent during the school day unless there is an emergency. We are good at supporting pupils and enabling them to solve their problems or to ask us for help.

8. Are there any exceptions to the policy?

- Yes, there could be exceptions for certain medical conditions e.g. a diabetic pupil who monitors blood glucose levels via their smartphone. If you have grounds to ask for an exception to be made, please contact the relevant Headteacher.

9. How will this policy benefit my child?

- It will protect children from the significant harm that can be caused by smartphones and social media.
- The research shows that they will be more likely to socialise with other pupils and therefore to develop stronger interpersonal skills.
- Their concentration will be better.
- They are more likely to achieve higher grades (than they would if they had free access to their phone).
- They are more likely to make the most of the extra-curricular opportunities.
- They are more likely to flourish!

10. What should I do if my child already has a smartphone and I am concerned about how much they use it?

- Firstly, it is important to acknowledge how difficult and common this issue is. For older children (11-16), it may be a good idea to show them the research on the harm that can be caused and discuss it with them. It can be a good idea to agree healthy boundaries together and consequences if they are broken. It is particularly important that children do not have phones in their bedrooms overnight because this can lead to sleep deprivation which can have a profoundly negative impact upon (mental) health. It can also impact on the quality of sleep that children get. Many psychologists advise that children should leave their phones downstairs and not use them for one hour before bedtime. For younger children (under 11), we would advise parents to replace smartphones with non-smartphones or to heavily restrict both the time that children can spend on the smartphone and the sites and apps that can be accessed. It is worth noting that social media apps can have a very negative impact on children's development and that children can end up accessing unsuitable sites (e.g. those that contain pornography, information, even advice, on self-harm, eating disorders and suicide).

As adults, we have a responsibility to protect children from such harms and it is worth considering that the most significant risk of harm to children is probably now in the digital world. You may find this article by Kate Silverton useful - see [here](#).

11. I've tried to remove/reduce my child's access to their smartphone but it led to such upset and big arguments that I am not sure it is worth it. What should I do?

- This is certainly not easy and no parent likes to be in conflict with their child and to see them upset. It is worth keeping the long-term aim in mind and remembering that putting boundaries in place is a way of showing your care and love. Come back to the reasons for your actions and persevere whilst empathising with your child's feelings. It will be worth it in the end and your child will be grateful one day – we know this from feedback from 6th Formers.

12. Does the school help to educate the children about the dangers of smartphone use and social media?

- Yes, this is a part of the personal development programme which is designed to enable the pupils to make healthy choices. We also intend to increasingly use 6th Form role models and young Old Berkhamstedians to deliver messages about healthy choices and the risks of smartphones and social media. We are aware that messages from young adults can be more impactful than those from teachers, school leaders, and even parents.

13. Will my child be able to use their smartphone before and after school?

- Yes, smartphones can be used before 08:30 and after 16:20 (unless the pupil is taking part in a school activity after the end of school when phones cannot be used).
- From September 2025, pupils in Year 7 will not be allowed to bring a smartphone onto any of the school sites. Parents are encouraged not to buy their children smartphones. The smartphone-free routine will follow these pupils (and those behind them) until at least the end of Year 9.

14. How will the school handle emergencies if pupils don't have their phones?

- In the same way such emergencies were handled before smartphones – parents can call the reception and we will find the relevant child or pass on a message. Pupils can make calls to parents from reception if necessary. Pupils can also email their parents from their school device.

15. What if my child needs their smartphone for a specific reason during school hours?

- They can't have it unless prior permission has been granted (see exceptions to the rules).

16. How will I be able to track my child if their phone is switched off or they do not have access to a smartphone?

- We don't believe it is necessary to track pupils at all times but there are alternative ways of tracking a child for parents who would like to do this. See [here](#) for some examples.

17. Does my child have to have a phone to travel on a school coach?

- No, there is an alternative. If your child does not have a smartphone, we can provide a QR code which can be printed out.

- Parents can manage bookings for their child through the app or online. Pupils can also view travel arrangements through a pupil link on the pupil portal. Please contact Mr Gillman, the Head of Estates Services, for further information (agillman@berkhamsted.com).

18. What are the rules for residential school trips?

- The trip leader will set the rules for residential trips and will explain these clearly before the trip. It may be that phones are not allowed, that they are allowed only at certain times, or (for Sixth Formers) that they are allowed to have their phones throughout the trip.

19. What if I need to contact my child during a residential trip and they don't have their phone?

- If there is an emergency, you can contact an allocated member of Berkhamsted staff who will arrange for you to speak with your child as soon as possible.

20. How did pupils adapt to having to use Yondr pouches in September 2024?

- Pupils adapted very quickly and found that they were able to concentrate much better. There were fewer disciplinary incidents involving the use of phones during school and we noticed pupils spending much more time socialising face to face with each other. Younger pupils started to play tag and other traditional children's games around the school and pupils started to play more table tennis, football and cricket around the quad.

21. Where can I find more information about the policy or further reading?

- The School's Behaviour and Discipline Policy contains the school's rules on phones under appendix 7 (please see [here](#) for information – this policy will be republished on the school website during the 2024 – 2025 academic year).
- There are more FAQs on the delay smartphones website [here](#).

22. Who can I contact for more information or to discuss specific concerns?

- You can contact your child's pastoral team in the first instance.

23. How can I set parental controls on a smartphone?

- Please see this guidance for Apple products:

Set up Family Sharing	On the adult's phone, go to Settings, and then your name, then Family Sharing to set up the group. Then add your family members using their Apple ID. More detail here .
Enable Screen Time	On the child's phone, go to Settings and tap Screen Time, then tap Turn On Screen Time. Choose This is My Child's [Device]. Follow the prompts until you get to Screen Time Passcode and create a passcode. Make sure you choose a passcode that's different from the passcode you use to unlock your device, and which is not known by your child. More help here. After you've confirmed your passcode, you'll be asked to enter your Apple ID and password. This can be used to reset the Screen Time passcode if you forget it.

Set App Limits	On the child's phone, go to Settings > Screen Time. Tap App Limits, then tap Add Limit. Select the app categories you would like to limit. We recommend that limits of 1 hour per day are applied for social media and games. Remember that many social media platforms can be accessed both by an app and by their website, so you will want to cover both. We recommend that you allow more generous access to apps and tools for learning, productivity, creativity, organisation, and wellbeing. You can choose to add restrictions on iTunes and App Store purchases, which mean that your child has to ask permission within the Screen Time app. This will come up as a notification on the adult's device. We recommend this for all pupils with a smartphone in Years 7-11.
Block Inappropriate Content	Next, to Settings > Screen Time > Content and Privacy Restrictions, and turn this on. You will need to use the Screen Time password you set earlier. We recommend that Store Content restrictions are switched on in line with your child's age, and that Web Content limits adult websites as a minimum.
Set Downtime	Now, go to Settings > Screen Time. Tap App and Website Activity if you haven't already done so. Then tap Downtime > Scheduled then tap Add Limit. We recommend that all pupils have Downtime enabled every day. They should not have access to social media or games after 9 p.m.
Choose Apps and Contacts to Allow at all times	Go to Settings > Screen Time > Always Allowed, to add the contacts and apps your child is allowed to communicate with during Downtime. We recommend keeping this list very short, to include parents and guardians, and emergency contacts only.

- You can find guidance for Android phones below:

Controls for 11-16 years old : Google Family Link

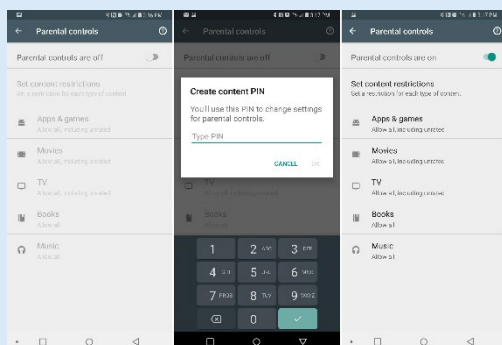
1. **Download** the Google Family Link App: you will need the parents app on your device, and the Google Family Link for Children app on your child's device. Search for it where you get your apps.
2. **Open** the Family Link app on the parent device. Navigate past the opening screens, and select your Google account. Google will ask if it's a parent's or child's account. Select **Parent**.
3. Next, **select** your Child's Google Account that you want to supervise.
4. Now get your child's device as prompted, and tap 'next' to show the link code. You will then open the Family Link App on the child's device. There will be some additional screens to click through, and then a code to enter from the parent's device.

5. Once this is set up, Google Family Link will allow you to set up parental controls, track your child's activity on their phone, restrict screen time each day, and set a bed time when the device is not usable after a certain time each night. **We recommend that this is set no later than 9pm.**

More information about Family Link

Controls for 16-18 years old: Parental Controls

1. Open Google Play App on the child's device and tap the **profile icon** in the top right corner.
2. Access **Settings**, then select **Family** and **Parental Controls**.
3. Enable Parental Controls by turning on the slider. Create a PIN that your child does not know.
4. Set **Content Restrictions**: here you can select the type of content you want to allow or block, and you can restrict access to content that is not age appropriate. We recommend that adult content should be blocked.



Note: Parental controls only apply to the Android device you added them on. To put parental controls on another device, repeat the steps above on the other devices. If you have multiple users on a device, you can set up different parental controls for each person.