

# FREE TO FOCUS - JOIN THE MOVEMENT

**OUR GOAL IS NO SMARTPHONES ON SITE, AT ALL UK SCHOOLS**

*Simplest for schools, empowering for parents, best for childhood*

## Brick-phone-only policies:

- give children a break from addictive-by-design technology
- protect pupils from online harm, non-consensual photography and constant distraction everywhere school has a duty of care and on the school commute
- support parents to delay giving younger children their first smartphone
- are low-cost for schools and parents

## What headteachers say:

"Banning smartphones completely has empowered parents in our community to delay buying smartphones for their children. My only regret is not doing it sooner."

"This was the easiest thing I've ever done because there was such a strong rationale for it."

"95% of students were against our policy, but since putting it in place even my year 11s say how much better it's been for them."



## Brick-phone-only policies:

### ARE SIMPLE & EFFECTIVE:

When "brick-phone-only" schools perform random bag searches they consistently find only 2-5 smartphones in cohorts of 800-1000 pupils.

### UNLOCK WIDER CHANGE:

25- 35% of year 7s at "brick-phone-only" schools don't have a smartphone at all versus 3% nationally.

Brick (call- or text-only) phones allow pupils to contact home in an emergency on the way to or from school.



# HOW DOES A BRICK-PHONE-ONLY POLICY WORK?

**1** Smartphones (and all personal internet-enabled devices) are prohibited items. They must not be brought onto school premises. If found, smartphones are confiscated for a significant period.

**2** Exemptions are made where smartphones are used for medical monitoring e.g., for diabetes, epilepsy, hearing aids.

"Brick" phones have no internet, no camera. Call or text only. From £20 to buy plus £1-£4 for data-free SIM.



**3** If parents need to contact their children on the school commute, simple (call-and-text-only) phones are permitted but must be kept off and away during the school day. This is effective because brick phones are not addictive-by-design.

**4** If parents need to track their children on the school commute, tracking devices are permitted. e.g., Apple Airtag, Samsung Galaxy SmartTag or similar

How to break into a pouch is common knowledge among pupils - see videos on TikTok

Spot checks recommended for all policies. Results from brick-phone only schools:

Fulham Boys School, London:

125 year 10s searched.  
0 smartphones found in bags, pockets or lockers.

Archer Academy, London:

850 yr 7-11s searched.  
5 smartphones found.

## Policy Options

IMPACT	Locked Pouches: Children keep smartphones in pouches, which remain on their person	Storage: Staff collect smartphones at the start of the day and securely store them.	Smartphones prohibited: Brick phones and trackers allowed, if needed.
Prevents pupils using or possessing smartphones throughout the school day?	?	✓	✓
Protects children from harm on school commute, and before/ after school starts, and on school trips?	X	X	✓

73% of children exposed to upsetting or explicit content say it happens on school grounds before/ after the school bell or on the way to and from school.\*2

Reduces risk of mugging and improves road safety. 41% of children say they were distracted by their smartphones while crossing the road on the school commute.\*2

# THE CASE FOR CHANGE

## New polling of 16-18 year olds shows: \*1

40%

40% have been shown or sent upsetting content during the school day (33% on another child's smartphone)

28% have been photographed or filmed by another student against their wishes.

28%

64%

64% say smartphones distracted them from talking to or spending time with friends in person during the school day

31% believe they would have achieved higher GCSE grades if smartphones had not been allowed into schools.

31%

52%

52% distracted from school work were distracted from engaging with schoolwork or lessons by a smartphone,

41% were distracted from crossing the road on the way to or from school.

41%

## Simon Bailey

National Policing Lead on Child Protection and Abuse Investigations (2014-2021)



**"A simple call-or-text only is more than enough if children need to be in contact with home on the way to and from school.**

*The evidence is increasingly clear: a smartphone in a child's pocket opens a door to risks that far outweigh any benefits.*

*The physical journey to school is statistically much safer than the digital journey a child takes once they unlock that screen, so we are trading a manageable physical risk for a profound digital one.*

*I deeply empathize with parents; in an uncertain world connection feels like a vital safety net but our priority must be to protect our children, not soothe parental anxiety."*

## What do parents think?

*"You will struggle to get a majority of parents to agree to anything at all. There's one exception to this: smartphones and social media. Parents want smartphones to be banned in schools and they support the government taking action to do this."*

**Frank Young, Chief Executive, Parentkind.**

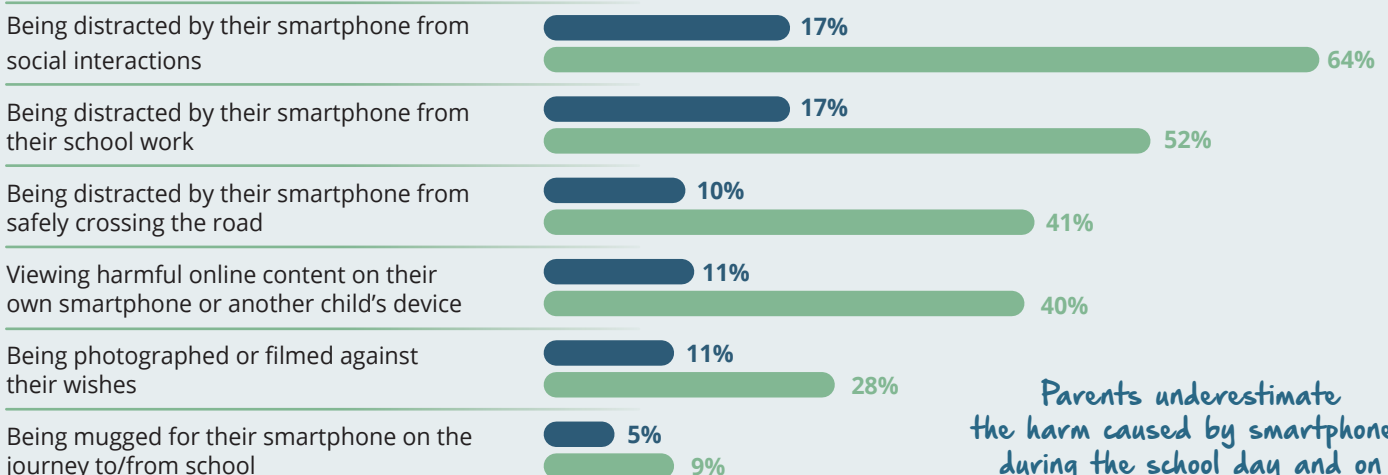
The majority of parents want to delay giving their child a smartphone. Prohibiting them from schools empowers and supports this decision, **reducing child smartphone ownership.**

Parent polling shows that when provided with information about the relative cost of pouches, brick-phone-only policies are the most popular.\*2

## Have you/your child experienced the following?

Comparing parents' awareness of the experiences of children.\*3

Parents ● 16-18 ●



68% of parents felt pressure to give their child a smartphone earlier than they would have ideally liked to.\*2

Parents underestimate the harm caused by smartphones during the school day and on the school commute

## Leanne Symonds

Headteacher at Ringwood School, Hampshire.

- 1550 students years 7-13
- Introduced a rolling ban for year 7s in September 2025
- 25% of year 7s don't own a smartphone at all
- 60% have no access to social media

*"Parents say it has empowered them to hold off getting a smartphone and that there have been fewer arguments about it at home. They say they're enjoying seeing their children interacting with their friends, ringing doorbells, chatting on the way to school, phoning each other to discuss social plans. It's transformational."*

## David Smith

Headteacher at Fulham Boys School, West London.

- 823 students years 7-11
- Introduced a complete ban for whole school in 2024
- 25% of year 7s and 8s don't own a smartphone at all
- 90% reduction in child sexual exploitation among year 7s and 8s

*"It's the thing I'm most proud of in my career because we're standing up for what is best for our boys. We believe technology is the future, we're just controlling the narrative. We're saying let the people who love them the most educate them on what the world is before the world gets its claws into them through smartphones."*

## Faye Bowler

Headteacher at Braunton Academy, North Devon.

- 870 students years 7-11
- Introduced a complete ban for whole school in September 2025
- Sexting/grooming incidents fallen from 9-2 in first term

*"95% of students were against our policy, but since putting it in place even my year 11s say how much better it's been for them and how much more they're talking to each other. It's early days but we've already seen a significant reduction in suspensions, safeguarding and bullying issues."*

## Toby Miller

Headteacher at St Peter's Catholic School, Guildford.

- 1350 students years 7-13
- Introduced a rolling ban for years 7-9 in September 2024

*"Banning smartphones completely has empowered parents in our community to delay buying smartphones for their children. My only regret is not doing it sooner. Parents say they wish we'd done it sooner too, especially parents with older siblings in the school who've had 5 years of the hassle and sometimes trauma that comes with smartphones. Now their younger child hasn't got one and they say the difference is extraordinary."*

## Louise Cowley

Headteacher at Oxford Spires Academy.

- 1300 students years 7-13
- Introduced a complete ban for years 7-11 in September 2025
- Sixth formers have requested a complete ban too!

*"This was the easiest thing I've ever done because there was such a strong rationale for it. My own children won't have a smartphone until they're 16 so why would I send out a message that it's ok for the children I serve to have one? We're now consulting on how to create smartphone free spaces for our sixth formers because they've asked us to extend the ban up to them. They want to be free from that constant distraction."*

## Nick Williams

Headteacher at Coten End Primary School, Warwick.

- 650 pupils
- Introduced a parent smartphone agreement September 2023
- Introduced a complete ban of smartphones July 2025

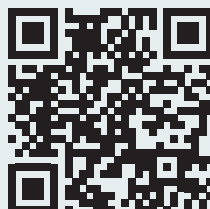
*"Our experience is that the majority of children who own a personal smartphone become involved in inappropriate behaviour online either as a victim or a perpetrator. So it's a no brainer to say they are not appropriate devices and cannot be brought into school."*

## Naheeda Maharasingam

Headteacher at Rathfern Primary School, London.

- 480 pupils
- Introduced a complete ban of smartphones January 2026

*"We have a responsibility to protect and nurture the developing minds of our children. In school we want children to be fully present – talking, playing, learning and thinking together. By taking a clear stand on smartphones, we are prioritising our pupils' ability to focus, to form healthy friendships, and to develop the habits of attention and reflection that will support them throughout their lives."*



*We host regular webinars for school leaders led by headteachers. Scan this QR for links on our website.*

1 - GGF Insights (Good Growth Foundation) conducted a nationally representative survey of 1,034 16-18 year olds in England and Wales. The Good Growth Foundation is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by all its rules. Fieldwork was conducted 23 January - 2 February 2026. Results were weighted to be representative of age and gender (combined), region and the socioeconomic grade of their household.

2 - GGF Insights (Good Growth Foundation) conducted a nationally representative survey of 2,002 British adults in England and Wales. The Good Growth Foundation is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by all its rules. Fieldwork was conducted 16 January - 19 January 2026. Results were weighted to be nationally and politically representative of all Britons, based on age, gender, education level, region, vote in 2024, vote in 2019, and political attention.