



May 2025

Dear Parent / Carer

### Smartphones and their impact on children and young people

Thank you to those of you who submitted a response to our consultation on a proposal to delay children's access to smartphones until they are older.

466 submissions were received, with 72% of respondent fully in favour of the proposal, 16% in favour but with some reservations, 7% not in favour due to certain reservations, and 5% against. The full outcomes are shared alongside this letter including a summary of respondents' comments to each prompt.

It was very helpful to read the detailed comments to understand the reasons why young people are given a smartphone and the concerns some parents had with the proposal. The following paragraphs state the position that our schools will adopt from September 2025 in light of the feedback, and an annex at the end of this letter speaks to the specific concerns raised with a view to allaying these.

#### Arrangements from September 2025

**Pupils in first schools:** Our expectation is that pupils in first schools will not be given access to a smartphone by their parents. Instead, parents may choose to provide a non-smart 'brick' phone (and/or tracking device) as desired. Individual schools will clarify their own policy on these.

Smartphones will be banned in school for pupils in first schools, i.e. they should not be brought to school at all. In exceptional circumstances, e.g. for a medical reason such as diabetes monitoring, a parent may write to the headteacher requesting special dispensation. [Please note, smartwatches will be deemed acceptable provided they have no internet connection or access to social media].

**Pupils in years 5 and 6 at middle school:** Our expectation is that pupils in these year groups will not be given access to a smartphone by their parents. Instead, parents may choose to provide a non-smart 'brick' phone (and/or tracking device) as desired. Non-smart 'brick' phones will be allowed to be brought to school and individual schools will clarify their own policy on these, e.g. if they are to be handed in each day or kept in bags, etc.

Smartphones will be banned in school for pupils in years 5 and 6, i.e. they should not be brought to school at all. In exceptional circumstances, e.g. for a medical reason such as diabetes monitoring, a parent may write to the headteacher requesting special dispensation. [Please note, smartwatches will be deemed acceptable provided they have no internet connection or access to social media].

**Pupils in years 7 and 8 in middle school:** We accept that many pupils moving into years 7 and 8 in September 2025 will already have a smartphone. For these year groups, St Joseph's Middle and Hexham Middle will

continue their respective policies on mobile phones that have applied up until now – please refer to the individual schools’ parent guides for details.

From September 2026, the approach as it applies to years 5 and 6 will extend to year 7, and then to year 8 from September 2027. At that point we will take a view as to whether or not to extend the approach to high school year groups.

As noted earlier, the full set of responses with summarised comments is sent with this letter. Further reflections on specific points made are included in an annex below.

Thank you again for your support of our schools and of our intended approach. Individual schools will provide further guidance and clarifications as required ahead of September.

Yours faithfully



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Suzanne Hart  
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Glenda Glenwright  
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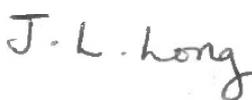
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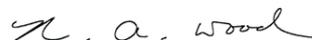
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Nick Wood  
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St Joseph’s Middle School



Sarah Oakes  
Headteacher  
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## Annex to letter – Reflections on concerns raised by parents in their survey responses

- **Communicating and tracking:** Parents value the facility to be able to contact their child when apart and to know their location. Such functionality is available via non-smartphones and devices such as smartwatches with no internet connection or social media. For examples, please see [here](#).
- **Transport:** Concern was expressed that smartphones may be required to enable a QR code to be scanned for use of school buses. NCC Transport have clarified that their ShuttleID pass works on non-smartphones – for more details please see [here](#). They have also advised that they can make physical cards available to users on request, with users also able to print out their QR code for use. For more information, please contact [schooltransport@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:schooltransport@northumberland.gov.uk).
- **Homework:** Parents noted that schools are increasingly setting online homework tasks and saw a potential contradiction with the proposal. Schools' expectation is not for such homework to be done on smartphones but instead via other devices (e.g. laptops/PCs in the family home), with support available where access to these devices may be problematic.
- **Broader educating around the safe use of smart technology:** Parents welcomed schools' role in educating children on the risks associated with smart technology and asked for this to be ongoing and responsive to developments. Hexham Partnership schools are committed to this and will continue to review the curriculum on the safe use of technology to ensure our provision speaks meaningfully to pupils.
- **Existing access to a smartphone:** We acknowledge that a number of current pupils in the year groups most affected by our new approach will already have a smartphone. We do not necessarily expect these to now be withdrawn (although some parents may choose to do this in light of our new approach). Pupils up to and including year 6 who already have a phone will be required not to bring it to school, unless given special dispensation following a written request to the headteacher by parents.
- **Age/stage of implementation** – We note the strong support for implementing the proposal up to and including year 8, and indeed up to and including year 11, noting that some advocated applying it only up to the end of year 4 and some to the end of year 6. We think that our approach responds to the strong support for the proposal but also speaks to the reality that many pupils going into years 7 and 8 next year already have a smartphone.