London Borough of Havering
ENGAYNE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Mrs S Sankey: Headteacher
01708 223492

Smartphone-free school from September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

From September 2026, children will only be allowed to bring feature phones to school. Children will not be allowed to bring a smartphone.

Permission to bring phones to school only applies to Y6. No other pupils are allowed to bring any form of phone to school unless in exceptional circumstances as agreed by Mrs Sankey.

We have made this decision for several reasons:

- We have experienced a number of smartphone-related problems both in and out of school.
- The government has stated its intention to ban phones entirely in schools.
- The vast majority of evidence indicates that the level of smartphone activity amongst children is harmful to them.

We hope that by introducing a ban on smartphones in school we will reduce the incentive to have one at home.

Children will still be allowed to bring a feature phone to school. However, these will be left with the teacher at the beginning of the day and given back to the children at dismissal. **Parents will need to complete a permission form if they wish their child to bring a phone to school.** We will issue this permission form in time for the new school term in September.

If you are in any doubt as to whether the phone you select for your child is a feature phone or not, please send the name of the make or model to us and we will advise.

Yours,

John Manifold

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Why is the school getting involved in this initiative?

We understand that many parents may want to hold off on smartphones and feel pressured into giving in because 'everyone else has one'. Having a school policy of being smartphone-free makes it easier for families and supports them in delaying getting their child a smartphone.

Q: Why does my child having a smartphone affect the school, if phones are not allowed to be used during school time?

A: We are noticing a huge increase in smartphone-related issues, which, despite taking place outside of school, are affecting the wellbeing of our pupils whilst in school. School is then obliged to investigate this, which takes up valuable time and resources.

Q: If incidents are happening outside of school, why do the school need to be involved?

The below extract from 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2024) is very clear about school's responsibility when it comes to safeguarding children online:

Child-on-child abuse

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online.

Child-on-child abuse can include:

bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)

As part of our safeguarding procedures, therefore, school has a duty and responsibility to follow up on any online incidents and to ensure that pupils are safe online, regardless of where incidents have taken place.

Q: My child walks home alone. How will I keep in touch with my child on their way to and from school?

A: Try a basic phone.

Our proposal is about becoming smartphone-free. They can still come to school with a basic phone. Every family wants to keep their child safe. A basic phone (calls and texts only) does the job without exposing them to the risks of social media and the internet.

In fact, a smartphone might actually make their journey *less* safe. It is noticeable how many children are distracted when using phones walking to / from school with little regard for road safety. Having phones can also make them a target for phone theft.

Q: What about iPads, laptops and gaming devices: do they count?

A: Any internet-enabled device needs careful monitoring

This isn't just about smartphones – but they are our focus because they are the main way children access the internet and social media, and all the risks they contain. Unlike other devices, smartphones are always within reach, making it easy for children to spend hours scrolling every day. Research is clear: the more time children spend online, the greater the impact on their mental wellbeing.

Laptops, iPads, and gaming devices do not fit in our pockets, meaning their use tends to be more intentional. The use of these devices can have benefits including: providing a way to socialise; having fun; and there are many educational benefits too. However, it is also important to be aware

of the risks involved and so would always recommend supervision, parental controls, and open conversations about safe and healthy use.

Q: Can't we just use an old iPhone with parental controls?
A: No. Parental controls help, but they're not a magic fix
Smartphones are designed to capture attention at all costs, and once your child has one, it's tough to step back.
Even with every restriction in place, there are loopholes. Children can find ways of working around these and no setting can stop your child from endlessly lobbying you for "just one app."
That's why many families find it simpler to skip smartphones altogether and start with a basic phone – one that just does what children actually need (calls and texts) without pulling them into an addictive digital world.

Q. My older child already has a phone – how do I tell my younger one no?
A: Set new family rules & agree a plan
Lots of families run into this. If your older child already has a phone but you don't want to give one to your younger child, the best thing to do is be upfront about why. Parenting decisions change as we learn more.
Instead of making it about fairness, involve your older child in the conversation. They've probably seen the downsides of having a phone early, and they might even agree that waiting a bit is a good idea. You can also set new family rules around tech use that apply to everyone, like limiting screen time or having phone-free zones.
Creating a family tech plan can help set expectations, so your younger child knows when and how they'll eventually get a device.