

St Stephen's School – Smart phones and devices: A Statement of Intent

Definitions

For the purposes of this document, we use the following definitions:

- **Dumb phone or 'brick' phone:** A simple mobile phone with basic features (calling, texting, sometimes limited media), lacking the advanced capabilities of a smartphone.
- **Smartphone:** A mobile phone that combines traditional calling/texting with advanced features like internet access, apps, cameras, and touchscreens, functioning like a handheld computer.
- **Smart Devices** - any device that can connect to the internet, take images or record sound, including fitness trackers and smartwatches.

Introduction

At St Stephen's, our priority is to provide a safe, focused, and nurturing learning environment in which all children can thrive. We recognise the growing presence of smartphones and smart devices in the lives of young people, and the opportunities and challenges they bring.

Our curriculum is carefully designed to alert our children to the benefits and risks of using all technology including computers, tablets/ I-Pads, gaming consoles. We run a number of sessions for parents to support them too. We are intending to extend this even further from September 2025.

We do not encourage the purchase of smart phones or smart devices for children of primary school age. This will be reflected in our new policy, which will be published later this term. However, we understand that the decision to purchase is parental choice and in some cases smart phones are essential e.g. medical needs.

New School Policy

After consultation with different groups, the Governing Body has made a decision that we will only allow smart phones/devices into school in exceptional circumstances. From October half term no smart devices will be allowed in school unless there is specific permission given by the Headteacher. This permission will only be given in exceptional circumstances. Every case will be considered individually. From October half term, if you would like your child to bring any smart device into school, you must fill in a form providing details of why your case is exceptional. E.g. your child needs a smart device as a result of medical needs. The form will be available from the start of October. Please be aware that you must also ask permission for a brick phone though there will be very few restrictions.

If permission is granted children will continue to be required to hand in any device to the office at the start of the school day (including 'brick' phones).

Please note that tracking your child's location will not be considered an exceptional reason for your child to bring in a smart device. You do not need to ask permission for an air tag, which is a one-way tracking device.

Next Steps

- To reassure our children that our policy is in line with most schools and we will not judge those who have a smart device. This is essential to safeguard our children. We want to ensure that children continue to talk to us about safe technology use, including smartphones if they have one at home, so that we can continue to safeguard our children effectively
- To continue educating our children in online safety to become responsible and safe digital citizens.
- To support our parent community; at St Stephen's, we know that deciding when and how to introduce any form of smart device is one of the more challenging decisions modern parents face. You're not alone—and we're here to support you. We pledge to offer workshops to share research to help you to make informed decisions. Please come along to these events that will help you understand the associated risks with all smart devices and how you can protect your child now or in future. Together, we can help our children build a healthy relationship with technology—one that serves them, not overwhelms them.

Summary

What This Means in Practice:

- All parents must seek permission for either a smartphone/device or brick phone, using the form that will be sent out at the start of October.
- Permission will only be provided in exceptional circumstances.
- We cannot accept responsibility for these phones when onsite.
- Devices brought into school must be switched off and handed in to the office from arrival until the end of the school day. Children are not allowed to use these on the playground or anywhere in the school premises.
- After October half term, only children who have permission to bring their devices to school may do so.