



Crich Junior School  
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Dear Parents/Carers,

In recent months there has been growing awareness of the harmful effects of smartphones and screentime on young people's well-being. New research has received extensive media coverage and thousands of parents have joined national campaigns such as [Smartphone Free Childhood](#), in a bid to delay giving smartphones to their children.

## The problem

When we first started giving smartphones to children, we didn't understand their impact. Now, there is a growing body of evidence linking smartphone use with [an array of harms](#). Smartphones are correlated with anxiety, depression and loneliness. They are a gateway to extreme content and unwanted communication. Research shows that smartphones affect academic performance, and many children show signs of behavioural addiction to their devices.

I urge every parent to look at the [latest evidence](#) of the negative impact smartphones are having on children.

**This [powerful short film](#) gives a good summary of the problem.  
PLEASE WATCH! (12 mins)**

For more information, [this video](#), from the Psychologist Jonathan Haidt gives a more detailed rundown of the evidence and is a powerful watch. (52 mins)

For a hard hitting documentary on this subject please watch [Swiped](#). (two episodes of 47mins)

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Or listen to this podcast with Dr Chatterjee and Jonathan Haidt called,

[\*\*How Smartphones Are Rewiring Our Brains, Why Social Media is Eradicating Childhood & The Truth About The Mental Health Epidemic with Jonathan Haidt\*\*](#)

(2 hours 6 mins)

**Our own school online survey demonstrates the following:**

**All of our children** have access to devices which can log on to the internet.

More than 60% of our children spend two hours or more on screens, during school evenings, which is proven to have a detrimental effect on their sleep patterns, which effects their growth, their physical and their mental health.

At weekends the figures are worse, with 66% spending two or more hours per day, and alarmingly 23% spending five or more hours per day on screens.

Obviously, we want to encourage our children to spend more time physically playing with friends, being outside, sharing family time, quietly enjoying solo pursuits such as reading, art, listening or playing /singing to music etc or just being bored and learning to devise their own fun.

One positive from the survey shows that 62% of our children **do not** have social media accounts and we would encourage the rest of our children to join this majority.

A key concern, and probably potentially the most significant of all, for users of Smartphones and screens, are its effect as experience blockers, distracting children from engaging in the real world.

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The average UK 12-year-old now spends [29 hours a week](#) – equivalent to a part-time job – on their smartphone. This leaves little time for the real-world activities and relationships that enable us to learn the essential life skills needed for the transition to adulthood.

It is not surprising that new research shows that the younger a child receives their first smartphone, [the worse their mental health](#). And yet, the age children are getting their first smartphone is getting younger and younger. In the UK, a fifth of 3-4 year olds own their own device and [24% of 5-7 year-olds](#) do.

### **The solution.**

In order to raise awareness of these concerns with Parents and Carers in our community, we have arranged a meeting with Dr Spells, from PAPAYA parents ([Meet the Team — Papaya Parents](#)), to discuss the issues further and look at collective action and share parental tips to avoid the dangers. Laura previously worked as a GP and now works as a doctor in Child and Adolescent Mental Health.

Accompanying Dr.Spells will be one of our governors, Dr Sneddon, a Paediatrician from Sheffield Children's hospital.

**The meeting is on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025, at the Black Swan, starting at 7:30pm in the outside upstairs meeting room.**

**Please note that the meeting is intended for adults, so we ask that no children attend. To book a place please complete the form below.**

**[Meeting Booking form.](#)**

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## **Crich Junior School, a smartphone free school.**

We do not feel we can ignore the evidence any longer. We already implement a policy whereby children's smartphones are no longer allowed on school premises, without mitigating circumstances. This decision has been made to show our commitment to a smartphone free childhood and ensure the welfare of our children.

After the Easter holidays, if there are circumstances that require your child to bring a smartphone into school, please collect and complete the request form from the school office.

Any phones allowed in school will be turned off and given to the class teacher until the end of the day.

There are other types of phones available that do not give a child access to the internet.

### *OPTION TO ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO DELAY GIVING CHILDREN A SMARTPHONE UNTIL AT LEAST THE END OF YEAR 9:*

We understand that many parents don't want to give their child a smartphone but feel they have no choice because everyone else is. No parent wants to isolate their child from their peer group. The solution to this problem lies in better regulation of the tech industry, but enacting legislation takes years – time that this generation of children don't have.

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Meanwhile our most powerful defence lies in taking collective action at school and at home.

Therefore, we strongly encourage parents to resist the pressure from your children and their peers and hold back on giving your children smartphones. If we all work together, social pressure is removed, and no child is the odd one out.

Our children's futures are so important, to you and to us. In a world where fast-changing and unregulated technology is actually impacting the development of our children's brains, it is up to us to stand up for them, and their futures.

We are already dealing with the negative impacts of children having smart phones and extended screentime, and these incidents are becoming more frequent.

Please take some time to consider the information in the links provided and also sign up to attend our meeting.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Yours sincerely,

Crich Junior School Governing Board.

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