



Dear Families,

6th December 2024

RE: Smart Phone Free Childhoods event at Courthouse Junior School – 21st January 2025 with Special Guest Speaker Tanya Goodin 6-7pm

I am writing to raise your attention to our smart phone free childhood event we are hosting on the 21st January 2025.

In a world increasingly dominated by digital devices, it's crucial that we prioritise early childhood development and foster phone-free environments for our children. At this event we will explore the importance of unplugged play, the science behind brain maturation, and practical strategies for limiting technology use to support the healthy growth and wellbeing of our youngest generation.

Join us on 21/01/2025 to hear more about how we can support our children as a community and hear from our guest speaker Tanya Goodin. Tanya is a 'Digital Detox expert' and states.... "Over the last two decades I've watched emerging technologies morph from trusted tools into manipulative masters. My work on digital wellbeing, tech ethics, artificial intelligence and responsible technology is all about putting you, me, and the next generation back in the driving seat." <https://tanyagoodin.com/about/>

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 pornography, cyberbullying, grooming, violent and extreme content. Research shows that smartphones affect academic performance and many children show signs of behavioural addiction to their devices.

Underpinning these harms is one that is potentially the most significant of all. Smartphones are experience blockers, distracting children from engaging in the real world. 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 a child gets 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. Many people don't want to get 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 Big Tech, but enacting legislation takes years – time that we as parents of children today don't have. In the meantime, our most powerful defence lies in banding together and taking collective action.

What role do primary schools play?

Currently there is no guidance from the government or NHS around when children should get smartphones, and in that vacuum, primary schools can play a powerful role in resetting to healthier norms. If primary schools are explicitly smartphone free, there is less peer pressure for children to have one. It becomes easier for parents to make pacts to delay together, meaning whole peer groups can transition to secondary school with simple phones rather than smartphones. If Heads support parents in delaying, parents will feel more confident in saying "no".

Executive Headteacher: Mr Lawrence Hyatt

Alwyn Head of School: Miss Kirsty Grierson

Courthouse Head of School: Mrs Fiona Hayes



We are providing a platform for yourselves as parents to take collective action together in ensuring children are able to have a childhood away from the invasive and disruptive influence that smart phones can have. The Smart phone free movement is growing and Berkshire has one of the highest sign-up rates from parents. The movement asks parents to pledge together, not to provide a smart phone until Secondary school.

What we are aiming to achieve and when:

2024-2025 and onwards - Encourage parents to delay buying smartphones

We are encouraging parents and asking you to consider encouraging others not to buy a smartphone until your children are at least 14. There is guidance on this issue, and your support for the school and other parents would help parents to say "no" with confidence. We would like you to help us - to become a broader school-wide group by letting parents know about the Smartphone Free Childhood [Parent Pact](#). We will also have links via the school newsletter. This is a simple digital tool that enables parents to come together and delay with others in their school community.

From September 2025 - Ensuring our school is *a genuinely smartphone free school environment*.

We will not allow smartphones on the premises from 2025. Many of our children use the time in transit between home and school and this leads to significant opportunities to engage with online content and often an opportunity for inappropriate behaviours.

For more information on smart phone free childhoods please see the flyer attached with this letter and the link to the smart phone free childhood here. <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>

To be clear we are not 'no tech'! We are talking about the right technology, at the right time for our youngest minds.

So, on the 21st January, come and join us for an introduction to smart phone free childhoods, a session on digital lives with Tanya Goodin our Guest speaker. This is a limited event **as we have only 200 spaces** in our hall. We have limited this to **maximum two spaces** per family. Please book a space via link below. Please also note that **children are not permitted to attend this event** due to the content and nature of the information that we are discussing.

Ticket Booking:

<https://www.alwyncourthousepta.com/event-info/smartphone-free-childhood-event>

Thank you for your continued support for the school.

Kind regards
Lawrence Hyatt
Executive Headteacher
Alwyn and Courthouse Federation

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