



THE AVON VALLEY SCHOOL & PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGE

16th June 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Subject: Update: Transitioning to a Smartphone-Free School for September 2026

I want to begin by extending a heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended our recent Parent Information Evening regarding the updates to our school mobile phone policy for September. It was fantastic to see parents engaging with us during the event; and to feel the shared commitment to improving our students' wellbeing and academic focus.

Those who attended were treated to an excellent presentation by former BBC journalist Charlotte Ashton, who is leading the local campaign for the national **Smartphone Free Childhood** movement. Her insights vividly highlighted the modern challenges our young people face, providing a brilliant space for open, honest discussion about the impact of smart tech on our children's development.

Our Collective Agreement for September 2026

I can now share that there was unanimous agreement among the parents in attendance regarding the school's plan to become a smartphone free school. This will be implemented by using a **lockable pouch solution** starting this September 2026.

To ensure absolute clarity on how this system will work for all students:

- **The Pouch:** Every student will be issued with a secure, lockable pouch at the start of the autumn term.
- **The Requirement:** Upon entering the school grounds, students must place all smart devices including smartphones, smartwatches, and connected tech inside their personal pouch and lock it.
- **The Routine:** Devices must remain locked inside the pouch throughout the entire school day, including break and lunch times. Students will keep the pouches in their bags, and they will be safely unlocked using main stations as they exit the school at home time.
- **Confiscation:** Any student found with a smart device not locked away securely in the pouch will have their phone confiscated for a minimum of 24 hours. A parent will also need to collect the device at the end of the confiscation period.

The Evidence Behind the Decision

During the evening, Charlotte shared the compelling, data-driven slides used by the **Smartphone Free Childhood** movement. These statistics clearly illustrate why removing the constant buzz of notifications is essential for our pupils' academic and mental health:

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- **Academic Performance:** Data from UK schools that have gone completely phone-free shows that students achieve GCSE results 1 to 2 grades higher than those who retain access to their devices.
- **Impact on Mental Health:** Children who regularly use smartphones are 2 times more likely to suffer from anxiety and 3 times more likely to be diagnosed with depression.
- **Drastic Reduction in Bullying:** Research from schools tracking a strict ban recorded a 43% to 46% drop in bullying and cyber-bullying incidents, markedly reducing peer anxiety.
- **The Cost of Interruption:** Cognitive science research has shown that it takes an average of 23 minutes for a child to refocus on a task after being interrupted by a single smartphone notification. With the average teen receiving 237 notifications a day, the impact on classroom learning is severe.
- **The Tech Tycoons:** The leading Tech Tycoons who invented the applications and devices have admitted that their technology has been designed to be maximally addictive to generate profits. They themselves have strict restrictions on their own children's access to devices, often choosing to not allow their own children to access the technology at all.
- **The Journey Safety Myth:** Statistics show that children are actually more at risk when travelling to and from school with a smartphone, compared to those who don't. Children are often distracted by smart devices putting them at greater risk of accidents, and are more likely to be the victim of a mugging having their smart device stolen.
- **Parental Controls Limitations:** Children find ways to circumnavigate such technology. Some of the most popular parental controls 'Apple Screentime' for example does not always work (approximately 30% of the time). The developers are aware, but have not fixed the issue.

Next Steps and Support

We know that this represents a shift for our families, but by working as a collective, we can successfully reset the norm for our children.

Over the coming weeks we will send out our draft policy and will seek some further feedback regarding the policy before finalising for September. Your views will then be considered further to make any final amendments before finalising.

For example; there was a strong feeling from parents who attended the parent event that they would like to see a longer confiscation period for anyone breaking the rules; to act as a much clearer deterrent.

Thank you once again for your overwhelming support on this initiative. Together, we are creating a safer, more focused, and happier environment where our pupils can truly thrive.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Blake Francis
Headteacher