



## Mobile Phones for Children Policy

Ratification by Headteacher	
Policy Updated:	July 2025
Date of next Review	July 2026
Signature (Headteacher):	<i>H Brown</i>

### Introduction

Warrender is committed to promoting mental wellbeing of our children to ensure that they feel happy and safe enabling them to progress socially, emotionally and academically- preparing them to excel at secondary school and thrive in the world beyond.

Research and experience show that smartphones can often be a distraction to learning, social interaction, and emotional wellbeing, particularly for younger students. This policy is designed to support our children's success, encourage positive habits, and promote a healthy balance between technology use and personal development. From the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year, children who bring a phone to school as a safety precaution when walking home, will not be permitted to bring a smartphone.

### Rationale

While digital technology plays an important and increasing role in modern society, a vast range of evidence shows that **young children benefit most from personal interaction, structured learning, and minimal screen exposure during the school day.**

Our decision is grounded in strong evidence and professional experience.

### Research states:

- **Cognitive Development:** studies show that excessive screen time, especially involving smartphones and tablets, can impact attention span, memory & retention, and academic performance. The World Health Organization recommends limited screen time for children under 12, and encourages prioritising activities including reading, physical play, and creative tasks. Research show that many children spend more time playing online than in person, replacing physical play with screen time; this is having a dramatic effect on childhood brain development and social skills, resulting in the 'rewiring' of the brain.
- **Social and Emotional Skills:** research from the University of Alberta and the American Academy of Paediatrics highlights that smartphone use can reduce face-to-face social interaction, which is vital for the emotional and social development of young children. The Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood reported that parental device distraction impedes on vital early eye contact and communication in infancy. This can have a detrimental effect on primary-aged children's basic social interaction skills such as making eye contact when having a conversation.
- **Mental Health:** A 2019 study published in *JAMA Paediatrics* found that increased screen time is associated with increasing levels of anxiety and depression in school-aged children. The *Anxious Generation (Jonathan Haidt)* cites research that demonstrates a direct link between, and dramatic increase in, teen depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide, especially amongst girls, when smartphones and social media are used during early adolescence. Since 2010, there has been a sharp rise in youth mental health concerns including self-harm, anxiety and depression.



# Warrender Primary School

- **Distraction and Safety:** Smartphones used amongst younger children often lead to concerns around access to inappropriate content. It is also well understood that access to smart devices at a young age can increase the risk of children being exposed to cyberbullying and online grooming as well as a target for theft. These incidents can be highly traumatic and are preventable by reducing the presence and visibility of high-valued devices amongst children.
- **Addiction and Dependency:** Social media platforms are designed to be addictive. Many children now spend upwards of 6–8 hours daily on their devices, often seeking validation through likes and shares. This pattern of use is detrimental to both academic focus and self-esteem.

## Key requirements for Junior children

Children in Year 5 and 6 may bring a mobile phone to school, but it must be a traditional phone that does not have WiFi access such as the Nokia 105, Nokia 110, or IMO Dash. Junior children are not permitted to bring smartphones on to the school site. If a child is found with a smartphone, it will be confiscated and a parent/guardian will be required to collect it.

## How to access social media safely

We recognise that social media is a significant part of young people's lives today. However, we believe that Junior children are not yet ready to safely and responsibly navigate these platforms, many of which have age restrictions they do not meet. Upholding these boundaries is essential to safeguarding their wellbeing and supporting healthy digital development. Warrender will host parent sessions on online safety and children have regular discussions about wellbeing, online activity and mental health as part of their PSHE curriculum. On the walk to school, we want to promote interaction with friends, awareness of their surrounding and their safety; some children are absorbed on their phones on the walk to school and outside school which present a danger to them.

## Responsibility for Devices

The school cannot accept responsibility for the loss, damage, or theft of any mobile phone brought into school. Students bringing a mobile phone do so at their own risk. Children are expected to switch off their phone and place it in the lockable phone box with their class teacher at the start of the day and collect them at the end of the day. Please label the phone so your child knows whose is whose.

## Smart watches

Students are not allowed to bring smart watches to school.

## Students with a medical condition

If a child has a medical condition that requires the use of a smartphone for health monitoring, such as diabetes, parents/guardians must inform the school in advance. This allows appropriate arrangements to be made to support the student's health needs while maintaining the integrity of the school's mobile phone policy. Adjustments will be put in place.

## Monitoring

The school is committed to ensuring that this policy has a positive impact on pupils' education, behaviour and welfare. When reviewing the policy, the school will take into account:

- Feedback from parents/carers and pupils
- Feedback from staff
- Records of behaviour and safeguarding incidents
- Relevant advice from the Department for Education, the local authority and any other relevant organisations