

DECEMBER 2025 EDITION

We are a community
Loving God, Serving other and Flourishing together

ST. MARK'S C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL



NEWSLETTER



RESPECT - ASPIRE - REJOICE



Confidence Creativity Independence



**Merry
Christmas**



"Encourage one another and build each other up" 1 Thessalonians 5:11



Headteacher's Christmas Message

As we reach the end of another busy term, I'd like to congratulate everyone — children, families and staff(!) — for surviving the whirlwind of the festive season! We've navigated a snowstorm of glitter, a '2026 calendar tab' shortage and plenty of Christmassy rehearsals with remarkable resilience.

Our children have worked hard, supported one another, and delivered services so enthusiastically that I'm sure Feliz Navidad could be heard from three streets away!

A special thank you to the staff team, who have demonstrated superhuman patience and calm, especially during the week when more than one lesson mysteriously became "Christmas themed."

To parents and carers, thank you for your ongoing support... supplying costumes, helping with carol words and lines, and for getting everyone to school in December despite dark, rainy mornings, and the occasional frosty windscreen.

As we head into the holiday, I hope you all enjoy a well-earned rest. May your days be merry, **bright**, and—if you're very lucky—peaceful for at least five minutes at a time.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Here's to another year of learning, laughter, dance routines and (maybe) slightly less glitter.

Mr Bright 

DECEMBER
EDITION

In Loving Memory

In Loving Memory of Dawn Maple

It is with deep sadness that we inform you of the passing of Dawn Maple, following her brave and courageous battle with cancer. Dawn was a valued TA and much-loved member of our community from November 2017 to July 2023.

Dawn embodied our vision and values and her care and commitment to those around her was admirable. A lady of great faith and compassion; she will be sadly missed.

A beautiful ceremony was recently held at The Woodlands in Lytchett this week, which was attended by many staff who came together to honour and celebrate Dawn's amazing life, alongside her family and other friends.



Our love, thoughts and heartfelt condolences are with Dawn's family, friends, and all those who knew her during this very difficult time.





Notices and Reminders

Reception Admissions – Final Tour Dates & Application Deadline

A reminder to all families with children starting school next September:



Our final Reception tour date is;

Friday 9 January 2026

If you would like to attend one of these sessions, please contact the school office to book a place.

Please also note that the deadline for submitting Reception applications is **Friday 15 January 2026**.

We encourage all parents to apply promptly to ensure your child's application is received on time.

Morning Routines

A digital clock icon with a black border, showing the time 8:40 in white digits on a black background.

During this term we have noticed an increase in children arriving to school late.

It's important that all children arrive on time and are ready to start their day of learning.

Many important lessons such as phonics and reading start at 8:40am.



ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Advice for Parents and Carers

ADVICE FOR HELPING CHILDREN WHO ARE RELUCTANT TO ATTEND

Listen & Reassure

Acknowledge how your child feels.
Keep morning routines calm and predictable.

Keep a Consistent Routine

Regular wake-up, breakfast, and bedtime times.
Prepare clothes, bags and lunches the night before.
Limit the use of technology, at least until your child is fully ready to leave the house.

Show Positive Assertiveness

Children mirror adult confidence – reassure them they can manage the day.
Praise small successes (getting ready, leaving home, arriving at school).

Bring Them In

Staying home can make worries grow.
Children settle quickly once they arrive.

Work with Us

Contact school early if mornings are difficult.
We can offer check-ins, meet-and-greet support, or help with friendship/learning worries.

WHY GOOD ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Builds confidence and resilience
Strengthens friendships
Supports learning and progress
Helps children feel secure and settled
Prepares them for their future responsibilities and commitments

We want to work together to support your child's success.

As we move through the colder months, we typically see an increase in coughs, colds and other seasonal illnesses. Most winter bugs are mild, and children recover well with rest, fluids and time.

Children can come to school if they have a mild cold, runny nose or cough but are otherwise well enough to take part in normal activities. If they are eating, playing and alert, they are usually fine to attend.

Please keep your child at home if they have:

- A fever (38°C or above) – they should be fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning.
- Vomiting or diarrhoea – keep them home for 48 hours after the last episode.
- Flu-like illness, are very tired or generally unwell.
- Worsening cough, breathing difficulties, or any illness that prevents them from managing the school day.
- A condition your doctor or the school has advised requires time off (e.g., chickenpox).

To help reduce the spread of winter bugs, please encourage good handwashing, plenty of fluids, good sleep routines, and “catch it, bin it, kill it” for coughs and sneezes.

Thank you for helping us keep our school community healthy this winter!





Important Notice to Parents and Carers



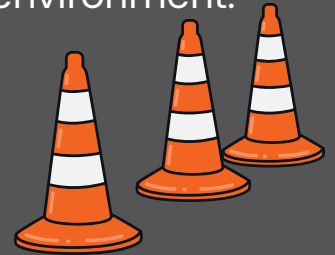
We continue to receive serious concerns from parents regarding ongoing **dangerous** and **inconsiderate parking** along the lane leading to the school.

Despite clear double yellow line road markings, vehicles are continuing to park along the lane, on grass verges, in unmarked bays, and in ways that block driveways and obstruct the highway. This behaviour is **unacceptable** and is putting children, families, residents, and staff at risk.

The lane is narrow and heavily used by children walking and cycling to and from school. Obstructive parking severely restricts visibility and access for pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles, creating a dangerous environment.

We ask all parents and carers to:

- Observe double yellow lines at all times
- **Not** park on grass verges or in unmarked areas
- Avoid blocking driveways, entrances, or the highway
- Park considerately and legally, even if this means parking further away and walking or re-circulating the one way system to find a space.



Please understand that if this situation does not improve immediately, Talbot Village Trust **may have no alternative but to restrict or close vehicular access** to the school at peak times in order to protect the safety of our children.

Please also be aware that Talbot Village Trust operates a parking monitoring system in this area. Vehicles causing an obstruction or parked inappropriately may be subject to enforcement action and a parking fine.

We trust that everyone will take this message seriously and work with us to ensure a safe environment for all.



Thank you for your cooperation.





Our Reception children delighted families and staff last week with their wonderful Nativity performance. For many of our youngest pupils, this was their very first time on stage – and what a fantastic job they did! From confident narrators and sparkling stars to enthusiastic Shepherds, Angels and Wise Men, every child played their part beautifully. Their singing filled the hall with festive cheer, and the children impressed us all with their clear voices, big smiles and excellent teamwork.

A huge thank you to the Reception staff for their creativity, patience and hard work in preparing the children, and to families for helping with costumes and practising lines at home. Your support made the performance truly special.

Most importantly, we are incredibly proud of our Reception children for their courage, enthusiasm and joy. They created a magical moment for our whole school community and reminded us all of the true spirit of the festive season.

Well done, Reception—you were stars in every sense of the word! ✨



Y1-6

Christmas Service



Christmas Services – Years 1-6

We were absolutely delighted with the Christmas Services held in church this week. Every year group from Years 1 to 6 gave a truly fabulous performance, filling the church with music, confidence, and Christmas spirit. Over the four services, we welcomed **565** adults into church. The children sang beautifully and represented the school with pride. It was wonderful to see so many families join us, and your support helped make each service feel even more special. A huge well done to all the children and staff for their hard work and enthusiasm in preparing for these performances. They were a joyful celebration to end the term, and we couldn't more proud.





**DECEMBER
EDITION**



School Council have chosen the Ellis Edwards Foundation as our local charity.

Ellis attended a local primary school but sadly passed away aged 11 after a long and brave battle with stage four neuroblastoma. The Ellis Edwards Foundation aspires to relieve the emotional and psychological distress experienced by a child during bereavement. The charity aims to improve the wellbeing of these bereaved children by providing respite activities that allow a grief break so that the children can recharge and be better ready to process their emotions further.

We also hope that whilst bereaved siblings are engaged in activities, it will allow other members of the family to also focus on themselves.

We collected donations for the charity at the end of our Christmas services and Nativity.

A huge thank you to those who donated on the days, helping us raise a fantastic **£457.32** for the charity. Thanks also if you donated directly.

You can still donate directly at
ellisedwardsfoundation.com/donate
or scan the QR code:





30th November - Christingle 4pm

14th December - Advent Compline 6pm

21st December - Celebration Nativity 10.30am

21st December - Carols by Candlelight 6pm

24th December - Crib Service 3pm

24th December - Midnight Mass - 11.30pm

25th December - Christmas day - 10am

**A Family friendly Christmas
Communion service**

St Mark's Church, Wallisdown Road
www.stmarkschurch-talbotvillage.org.uk

St Mark's
TALBOT
VILLAGE
ESTD 1870



Christmas Party Day

Santa Visits Our School

We were delighted to welcome a very special visitor to our school this festive season – Santa Claus! 🎅

Santa took the time to walk around all of our classes, spreading smiles and Christmas cheer wherever he went. Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 were thrilled to meet him and enjoyed a friendly chat and received a special gift.

It was wonderful to see so many happy faces and to share such a joyful moment together.

A big thank you to Santa for taking time out of his busy schedule to visit us – it's a day the children will remember fondly! He has given us the details of the charity he champions if anyone would like to donate to Latch Wales.





Christmas Party Day

Thank You To Our Catering Team



A huge thank you to our fantastic chef and lunchtime team for preparing and serving a wonderful Christmas lunch for both staff and children.

With over 350 covers served, the team worked incredibly hard to ensure everyone enjoyed a delicious and festive meal. Their dedication, organisation and cheerful spirit helped make the day extra special for our whole school community.



We are very grateful for all their efforts – thank you for helping to create such a memorable Christmas celebration!





Spirituality and Community



Our Vision:

We believe that by **Loving God** and **Serving others**, we can all fulfil our potential in **Flourishing together**.



Advent

This month in Collective Worship, we have been reflecting on the special season of Advent, focusing on the weekly themes of Hope, Love, Peace, and Joy.

Alongside this, we have been joyfully learning new carols and songs in preparation for this week's Christmas Carol Services, embracing the spirit of the season together.



Our Spring Term worship theme is LOVING GOD



Reception story telling evening



Last week, we opened our doors for a truly magical Christmas storytelling evening for our Reception families.

Children gathered wide-eyed and cosy, wrapped in pyjamas and excitement, as stories of snowy forests, kind-hearted heroes, and Christmas magic came to life. Each tale was told with warmth and care, inviting imaginations to wander and hearts to glow.

The gentle rustle of pages, the flicker of lights, and the joy on the children's faces created an atmosphere that felt both peaceful and enchanting. It was a reminder of how powerful stories can be; bringing us together, sparking creativity, and creating memories that lingered long after the last word was read.

We are so proud of the children for the way they listened, shared in the magic, and embraced the spirit of the season. Thank you for your continued support in helping us create moments like these, where learning, imagination, and joy meet.





Musical Theatre Group Spreads Joy at Local Care Home

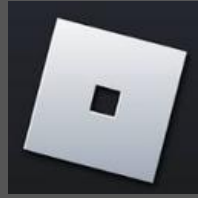
Recently, members of our Musical Theatre group enjoyed a truly special visit to a local care home, Adam's Court, where they performed a selection of well-loved songs for residents and staff. The visit was filled with music, smiles and plenty of toe-tapping moments.

The group sang a variety of songs from popular musicals, creating a lively and uplifting atmosphere. Residents joined in by clapping along, singing familiar choruses and sharing memories that the music brought back. It was heart-warming to see how much joy live performance can bring and how quickly music can connect people of all ages.

Our performers showed fantastic confidence, enthusiasm and kindness throughout the visit, taking time to chat with residents and ensure everyone felt included. Staff at the care home commented on how much the visit was appreciated and how uplifting it was for everyone involved.

The visit was a wonderful reminder of the power of music and performance to brighten days and bring communities together. We are so proud of our Musical Theatre group for representing us so positively and look forward to more opportunities in the future.





E-Safety Corner

Roblox has announced a major update to its safety features, describing its new facial age-check requirement for chat features as a potential “gold standard” for online safety. Roblox’s newest measures are an ambitious step forward and if implemented effectively, may set an important precedent for other platforms to follow.

Age-Appropriate Communication

Roblox’s introduction of mandatory facial age checks for chat access represents a notable shift in how online platforms may approach user verification in the future.

Roblox will soon assign users towards age groups using facial checks whilst restricting cross-group communication. Roblox has also defaulted experience-based chat to “off” for under-9s (unless a parent explicitly agrees) as an additional part of their new update. This is a move for Roblox to reduce inappropriate contact between adults and younger users as well as work towards keeping younger people in safer digital spaces when using chat features.

Privacy Considerations

Roblox emphasises that the facial age estimation process uses privacy-protective methods, with images processed solely for age verification and then deleted immediately. Protecting children’s biometric data is critical, and it is positive to see Roblox acknowledging that trust in such a process, hinges on transparency and robust safeguards.

As with any technology dependent on biometric estimation, accuracy, and security will be vital. We look forward to learning more about how these assurances are upheld in practice.

The Impact Will Matter

While these initiatives are promising, their success will ultimately depend on: Implementation quality: Are these age checks reliable, accurate, and accessible for global users?

Impact: Will these processes evidently reduce harmful interactions and improve safety for users?

If these measures operate as intended, they could pave the way for a new industry standard, encouraging other platforms to adopt similar age-sensitive approaches. We welcome the intention behind these developments and the willingness to lead on an issue that affects millions of young people worldwide.

At the same time, we will watch closely as the features roll out in December and January across the world. Meaningful change depends not just on strong policies, but on their practical, measurable impact on users’ experiences.



S&PA

December updates



HOW MUCH WE RAISED

SPARKLE DISCO



CHRISTMAS FAIR



Thank you to A-One Insurance Group for sponsoring our tree!

The children loved it, and year 6s had a ball decorating!

Christmas Fair

We hope you'll agree our Christmas Fair was a roaring success, and much of this was down to the time and efforts of our volunteers - **thank you so much!** Whether it was helping with setting up, manning stalls, making food, agreeing to be splatted(!), or packing down, we couldn't have done it without you!

Planning for our Summer Fair will start early next year, so if you'd be kind enough to volunteer your time again, or for the first time, we'd love to hear from you! It really does make a difference to our wonderful school community. Email stmarkssandpa@hotmail.co.uk to express your interest.



OUR NEW CHAIR



Kayleigh Reghif has taken over from Mike Evans as the Chair of the S&PA. She has a son in year 1 and (hopefully!) another son starting next year. Feel free to say hi!

Have a wonderful Christmas!

Team Colour Points

The Teampoint token count up for this term is as follows;



Yellow Team



Purple Team



Blue Team



Green Team



Red Team



Orange Team

The lucky winning team got an additional breaktime today and a sweet treat to celebrate their Autumn Term victory.



January

Back to school 08:30

5

Mon 2026

January

Reception - Vision Screening Service

6

Tue 2026

January

Reception Tours 2026 - 2027

9

Fri 2026

09:30 to 10:30

February

School breaks up for half term holiday - normal finish time

13

Fri 2026

Swimming Pool Update

Works are progressing well, with all the roofing works to be completed by the end of next week, both internally and externally.

External scaffolding will be taken down next week also, as well as a Gable end being replaced.

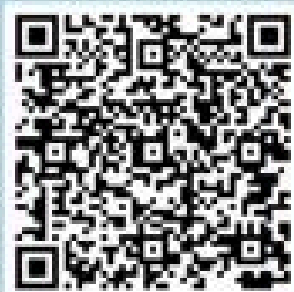
Internal Electrics & Painting will commence in the new year.

We are holding regular contractor visits to keep fully up to date with the progress being made.

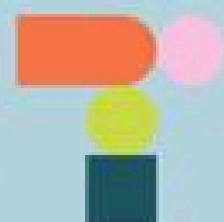
**SATURDAY 20TH
DECEMBER**

Winter Solstice crown making
workshops and fireside
storytelling

2pm to 3.30pm Crown making workshop for
families at Slades Park Pavilion Café
Book your tickets on Eventbrite, £4 per person



Procession and fireside stories
Meet outside the café at 4pm for the
procession into the woods
(free to attend, no booking required)





Karate Classes Restarting

The "Sport Karate" classes will be re-starting on **Wednesday 7th January and Friday 9th January 2026** at St Marks Primary school. At this time, we will be welcoming new beginners and existing students from Years 2 – 6. If this is not convenient, please note that we also offer external classes. www.sekf.co.uk

The award-winning classes which have been featured by the BBC and Meridian TV on several occasions will be run by Collin Rudkin, 7th Dan Black Belt, ex-England international and his team of instructors.

All the SEKF instructors are enhanced DBS checked and have attended child safe-guarding / first aid courses and continue to update on a regular basis.

Sport Karate is an exciting and dynamic way of keeping fit, improving coordination whilst gaining self-confidence.

In keeping with the school's Ethos, Collin Rudkin, and his team of Instructors, encourage a positive attitude and respect for others.

Training Day	Wednesday or Friday (Please state below)
Time:	3.00pm – 4.10pm
At:	Music room
Clothing:	Sports-Kit / Karate suit

Cost for new members: £36.00 (January) Then monthly Standing Order £40.00 starting 1st February

Please message the details requested to Sensei Collin Rudkin and make payment to the bank account below using your child's name and school code SMS as Reference prior to **Monday 5th January** to reserve your child's place for this popular class.

Parents will receive confirmation prior to the class starting and will be offered a refund if their child does not wish to continue after the first lesson or if the class is full.

Information required.

Student Name: School attending: Class name/Year group and day training Wed or Fri

Cost for Existing members: £40.00 Monthly fee (Includes Saturday course)

Existing students are guaranteed their place and do not need to confirm if payment is made via Standing Order for the 1st of each month.

If you have any further enquiries, please contact Sensei Collin: 07966 303 585

Payment details: Name: Southern England Karate Federation
Account No: 03807886 **Sort Code:** 20-96-96

Festive Holiday Camps at Sir David English

Monday 22 & Tuesday 23 December

Monday 29 & Tuesday 30 December

Action-packed camps for ages 5-11

Fun sports, games, and crafts in a safe, secure setting with our experienced team.



Morning Camp 08:30 - 12:30

Afternoon Camp 12:00 - 16:30

Full day Camp 08:30 - 16:30

Lunch served at 12pm.



Scan to
book a
spot now!








bhlive**active**

**ROCK
STEADY**

ROCK AND POP BAND LESSONS!



IGNITE THEIR SELF-BELIEF

-  Children learn to play an instrument in their very own band.
-  Fun and inclusive in-school band lessons. No music theory involved.
-  Follow their musical journey in your Backstage account.
-  Exam-free, Ofqual-regulated Trinity music qualification.
-  Instruments provided and no experience necessary.

**BOOK YOUR CHILD'S
PLACE ONLINE**



0330 113 0330 (Mon-Thurs 8am-8pm, Fri 8am-6pm, local rate)

rocksteadymusicschool.com

**ROCK
STEADY**



LEARN TO PLAY MUSIC IN A BAND THAT'S FOR EVERYONE.

Choose from: Keyboard, guitar, bass, drums or vocals.

Inclusive and hassle-free!

Takes place in school, instruments provided and no experience necessary!

Have fun and learn by playing

Children work their way through a curriculum of up to 300 musical skills.

Taught by professional musicians

Rocksteady band leaders are highly trained musicians who make learning music fun.

Much more than music

Improves wellbeing, confidence, social skills and academic achievement.

Progress at their own pace

Your child can achieve an exam-free, Ofqual-regulated Trinity music qualification!

End every term on a high note

Watch your child shine as they perform in their end of term concerts.

"Her confidence has grown so much. It has helped her in all aspects of her life."

Louise

"My son actually wants to go to school on his Rocksteady days. It has given him an alternative to academic learning."

Michelle

"I've seen him flourish socially and have friends across the year group."

Bekki

£44.68 per month (no payment in August).
Money back guarantee for the first month. Cancel at any time.

**START THEIR
MUSICAL JOURNEY**



0330 113 0330
(Mon-Thurs 8am-8pm Fri 8am-6pm, local rate)
info@rocksteadymusicschool.com

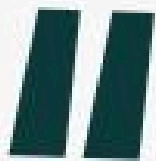
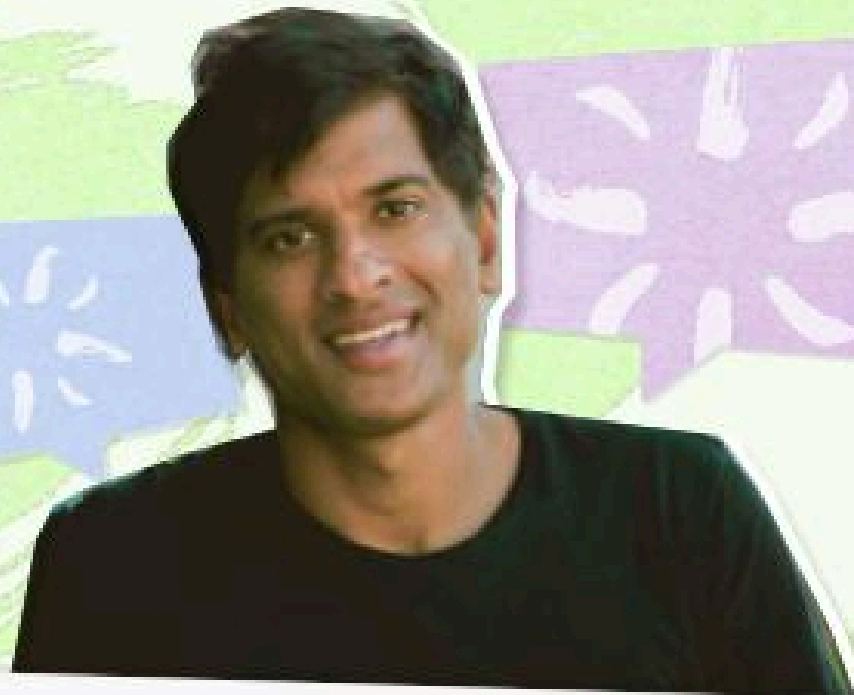
TRINITY
COLLEGE LONDON
Trinity College London
Institution Code: 1000
Institution and Examinations: 100000



Rocksteady Music School Ltd. Registered in England No. 8873028



DR CHATTERJEE



As parents bringing up kids in the age of smartphones, we're all just doing our best in a brand new world we didn't grow up with.

As a father to a 12 and 14-year-old, I know firsthand how hard it is, which is why I've teamed up with Smartphone Free Childhood.

I love what this grassroots movement is up to, providing support and empowerment to parents across the UK, because I believe this is the most urgent public health issue of our time. It's not just a parent issue, it's a human issue.

I've collaborated with them on some top tips to help you navigate this – whether your child has a smartphone already, or you're feeling the pressure to get them one."

5 tips for parents deciding when to get their child a smartphone

If you're worried about giving your child a smartphone but don't want them to feel left out, you're not alone. Many parents are facing the same dilemma. Here are five practical tips to help you decide when it's the right time.

01. Educate yourself about the issue

Before making any decisions, take some time to understand how smartphones can impact young people's mental health, sleep, and focus. Watching the Channel4 documentary [Swiped](#), on which Dr Chatterjee is the expert voice, is a great start.

02. Have open conversations

Talk openly with your child. Share your concerns, but also listen to how they feel. Explain that this decision is about supporting their health and future, not just enforcing rules. Honest conversations build trust and understanding. Check out the [Smartphone Free Childhood guide](#) to discussing this issue with kids of every age.

03. Discuss the benefits of being smartphone-free

Help your child see the positives. Without a smartphone, they'll have more time for hobbies, real-life friendships, and building independence. Focus on what they'll gain – not what they're missing. For extra inspiration, read the [7 Superpowers of Smartphone-Free Kids](#).

04. Offer alternatives

Delaying a smartphone doesn't have to mean leaving your child without a way to stay connected. A growing range of child-friendly phones now let kids call and message without the risks of internet access, social media, or addictive apps. These devices are a reassuring middle ground – giving children independence while protecting their wellbeing. Explore the [SFC guide](#) to the best simple phones for kids.

05. Sign a Parent Pact with others

The [Parent Pact](#) brings together families who are delaying smartphones and social media, offering strength in numbers and reducing peer pressure. Sign up to delay smartphones till 14 and social media till 16, and you can see how many others have signed in your child's school and year group, and connect with them via your regional Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group.

Delaying doesn't mean forever – it can simply involve waiting a few more years until your child's better able to deal with the digital world, and giving a simple phone in the meantime.

5 ways to help your kids build healthier smartphone habits

Smartphones have been around for barely 15 years, and as parents, we're still figuring out how best to navigate bringing up kids in the digital age. If your child already has a smartphone, it's never too late to help them build healthier habits.

Here are five simple steps to support them:

01. Set up parental controls

Use parental controls to limit screen time, block inappropriate content and ensure their device is as safe as it can be. Most phones have built-in options, or you can explore third-party tools such as Qustodio for more control.

02. No phones at mealtimes

Set a rule: no phones at the table. This encourages real conversations and helps everyone stay present and connected in real life for regular times each day.

03. No phones an hour before bed

Phones before bed can disrupt sleep. Set a rule that phones go away at least an hour before bedtime. This helps reduce blue light exposure, allowing your child to get a better, longer night's sleep.

04. Create tech-free zones

Establish tech-free zones in your home, particularly in bedrooms. Alone at night in their bedroom is where kids are most likely to come to harm via their smartphone, so a no phones in the bedroom rule keeps them safe and promotes better, deeper sleep.

05. Take a break

Introduce regular phone-free times, like 'Smartphone Free Sundays' or family outings with no screens. These breaks give everyone a chance to disconnect, recharge, and connect with each other face-to-face.

These boundaries help your child build a healthier relationship with tech so that they can thrive at school, with friends and at home.

Smartphone Free Childhood is a grassroots movement bringing parents together to stand up for healthier, happier childhoods.

Founded in February 2024 after one WhatsApp group went viral, we're now a community of over 350,000 parents working together to change the culture around kids and smartphones.

We've made it our mission to provide solidarity, support and solutions to parents who are struggling with what's become one of the defining parenting challenges of our time.

Here's how you can get involved:



Sign the [Parent Pact](#) and join a community of parents delaying smartphones till 14 and social media till 16. Check out the leaderboards to see how many others have signed in your school and year group too.



Join your regional [SFC WhatsApp](#) community (there's one in every county in Britain!), to connect with other families in your neighbourhood for solidarity and inspiration.



Subscribe to our [newsletter](#) for all the latest resources, ideas and updates from the campaign.