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Ursuline
High School
WIMBLEDON

Voluntary Aided 11-18 Roman Catholic School for Girls
Headteacher: Mr Eoin Kelly

Crescent Road, Wimbledon, London SW20 8HA
020 8255 2688 / www.ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk

Smart Devices and social media – Guidance, Recommendations and Resources, 2025-2026

Smartphones and social media are huge safeguarding concerns which you will all be aware of due to ongoing research, campaigning and media attention.

In addition, academic research is clear that mobile phone use in school is a distraction, negatively impact behaviour, progress and attainment, compromise the integrity of assessments, enable access to apps we cannot control or monitor in school and are banned by JCQ, the exams regulatory authority.

Smart Devices and social media at school

We are proud to say we have a clear policy in place regarding the use of phones and smart watches at school.

Phones are allowed for travel purposes. However, to help keep everyone safe while commuting and at school, we recommend that expensive mobile phones are not brought into school. However, this is at parents' discretion.

Smart Watches of any kind are not allowed on school premises at all. Please keep them at home.

Regardless of phone make/model, and in accordance with research, Government guidance and our [Digital Learning & Safety Policy](#), **if you choose to send your daughter to school with a mobile phone, it must be switched off, placed in their padlocked locker at the start of the day and remain there until the end of the day. Any phones seen or heard in school will be confiscated.** There are **exceptions for medical reasons**, please speak to us.

If a phone (or other device) is confiscated, a letter will be sent home to inform parents and request that they collect it from Student Services. Confiscated devices will not be returned on the same day. Students who are concerned about being contactable on the way home will be offered one of our school's 'emergency' phones and they can text the number to a parent, returning the phone to Student Services the next day.





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In accordance with our [Digital Learning & Safety Policy](#) (and the current minimum age of 13), **social media will not be tolerated at school**, and there will be consequences for anyone found to be engaging in it 'for bad' regardless of whether they are of the minimum age. If students do use social media, this will be taken into consideration when dealing with issues raised.

Research

There is growing evidence of the negative impact of smartphones and social media. Smartphones are highly addictive, correlate to mental health problems, negatively impact sleep and social skills, expose children to harmful content, reduce attention spans, and rob children of their childhood. There is a call to delay smartphones and to date over 100,000 [Smartphone Free Childhood](#) parent pacts - agreeing to delay the smartphone - have been signed across the UK, many of these within our community.

Whilst social media does not negatively impact everyone, every child who uses these platforms is exposed to dangerous algorithms that care nothing about their wellbeing. In 2023, The Online Safety Bill was introduced and The US Surgeon General, Dr Vivek Murthy, published his [Advisory](#) that social media poses "a profound risk of harm". In 2024 CEOs of Discord, Meta, Snapchat, TikTok, and X were questioned before US Congress over alleged harms to young users on their platforms and Jonathan Haidt launched #freetheanxiousgeneration, a movement (and book) looking at the 'great re-wiring' of childhood. At the end of 2024 the 'Swiped' Documentary aired and 2025 has brought us the harrowing and groundbreaking miniseries 'Adolescence'. Whilst social media currently has a minimum age of 13+, there is widespread campaigning for the minimum age to be raised to 16+. We'd therefore recommend parents do their research and consider delaying social media well past the age of 13.

Recommendations and Resources

To keep our children safe, it is essential they are media literate, can think critically and have boundaries. Normalising difficult conversations and holding open and ongoing discussions within the household around **online safety, challenges and dangers, fake news, algorithm bubbles and how to change them, echo chambers** and so on is key.





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Should you allow your daughter(s) to have a smartphone/digital device and/or access to social media, we recommend **following expert advice:**

- **Researching apps** to understand the **dangers and risks** before they are allowed.
- Agreeing family rules including **family digital contracts**.
- Setting up **parental controls, screen time, Ask to Buy, app limits** and **content & privacy restrictions**.
- **Removing screens from bedrooms** especially during homework and overnight.
- **Password sharing.**
- Regularly **checking your child's devices.**
- **Delaying, avoiding or limiting social media and web browsing.**

It is essential that parents get to know the common platforms and how your children engage with them, understand more about online cultures and terminology, and talk to your kids about what they are engaging with and how it makes them feel. Finally, if you suspect risky behaviour then reach out for help.

There are many valuable online safety resources available to parents including [Common Sense Media](#), [Devorah Heitner](#), [Dr Jean Twenge](#), [Jessica Chalmers \(Social Jess\)](#), [Jonathan Haidt](#), [National Online Safety](#), [NSPCC](#), [Titania Jordan](#), [Thinkuknow.co.uk](#), and [UK Safer Internet Centre](#).

The Netflix drama [Adolescence](#), and documentaries [Swiped](#), [Childhood 2.0](#) and [The Social Dilemma](#) are recommended. Also, Jonathan Haidt's [The Anxious Generation](#) and Dr Vivek Murthy's [The Social Media and Youth Mental Health Advisory](#) are very insightful reads and finally, the UK campaigns [@smartphonefreechildhood](#), [@delaysmartphones](#) and [Safescreens.org are ones to follow](#).

Please visit the [Keeping Safe Online](#) page of our website to access our extensive online safety resource library. In addition, you can access our Directory of additional parenting resources [here](#).

Thank you in advance for your support. We need to work together to support our young people, and we are stronger when we all do the same.

Yours faithfully,

