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Voluntary Aided 11-18 Roman Catholic School for Girls
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Mobile Phones, Smart Watches and Social Media – Guidance, Resources and Recommendations

Mobile phones and Smart Watches at school

Academic research is clear that mobile phone and smart watch use in school are 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.

To help keep everyone safe while commuting and at school, we recommend that expensive mobile phones and smart watches are not brought into school. However, this is at parents' discretion.

Regardless of phone/watch 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 and/or smart watch, 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/watches seen or heard in school will be confiscated. There are **exceptions for medical reasons**. If your child needs access to a medical app, please speak to us.

If a phone or watch 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.

Smartphones

There is growing evidence of the negative impact of smartphones: they 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 widespread campaigning for the smartphone to be delayed.





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Social Media

Social media currently has a minimum age of 13+. However, many experts, educators and parents believe social media is not suitable for young teens. The Online Safety Bill was introduced in 2023 and there is widespread campaigning for the minimum age to be raised to 16+. We'd therefore recommend parents do their research to help make an informed decision about whether to give your children access once they reach 13.

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 US Surgeon General, Dr Vivek Murthy, published his [Advisory](#) that social media poses "a profound risk of harm" and 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.

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.

Resources and Recommendations

To keep our children safe, it is essential they are media literate, and have boundaries. Holding regular discussions within the household around **online safety, challenges and dangers, fake news, the algorithms, echo chambers** and so on is key.

Should you allow your daughter(s) to have a smartphone, we recommend following expert advice and agreeing family rules including setting up **parental controls**, enabling **Ask to Buy**, setting up **screen time, app limits** and **content & privacy restrictions**, **removing phones from bedrooms** especially during homework and overnight, **password sharing**, **regularly checking your child's phones**, and **delaying, avoiding or limiting social media and web browsing**.

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](#).





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The documentaries Childhood 2.0 and The Social Network are recommended as is the Ezra Klein Show podcast: the Teen mental health crisis, episodes 1 & 2 (May 2023). 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.

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,

