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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](http://www.ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk)

## Mobile Phone, Smart Device and Social Media – Guidance, Recommendations and Resources, 2026-2027

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 impacts 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.

### Mobile Phones and Smart Devices

Following extensive stakeholder consultation, our mobile phone policy for the 2026-27 academic year is summarised below. Please be aware that our policy has different requirements for different year groups as outlined.

**Ursuline students are permitted to bring a mobile phone to school for travel purposes, but there are specific requirements:**

**Year 7:** traditional 'non-smart' phone only. A non-smart phone has no access to external apps and cannot connect to the internet. [Smartphone Alternatives](#). Any year 7 student carrying a smartphone will be in breach of our Policy and the Agreement of Expectations signed by parents/carers.

**Year 8-11** students may travel with a 'smartphone'.

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.** Please keep them at home.

Students are also permitted to bring internet-enabled **tracker devices** to school, e.g. Apple/Amazon tags, should parents wish to track their child's journey to and from school in real time. These devices should be stored securely in the child's bag or on their person during the school day.





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**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 of any kind, 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.

### Social Media

Year 7 and many year 8 students are prohibited from using any form of social media in accordance with our school policy and in line minimum age restrictions (13+ currently). These include BeReal, Discord, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, TikTok, X, and WhatsApp.

However, because of wide-spread campaigning by many experts, educators and parents the Government has announced that the **minimum age is set to be raised to 16+ from Spring 2027** which will impact additional year groups. Read more [here](#).

There will be consequences for anyone found to be engaging in social media '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.





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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, 2025 brought us the harrowing and groundbreaking miniseries ‘Adolescence’ and in 2026 Louis Theroux’s Inside the Manosphere launched. As a result of the wide-spread campaigning in Spring 2027, the Government will [raise the minimum age to 16+](#), with some restrictions for 16–17-year-olds.

### 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.

Should you allow your daughter(s) to have a smartphone/digital device and/or access to social media when they reach the minimum age, 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**.
- **Using accurate date of births on their profiles**.
- **Removing screens from bedrooms** especially during homework and overnight.
- **Username and Password sharing**.
- Regularly **checking your child’s devices**.
- **Avoiding or delaying social media & web browsing until 16+ and then limiting use**.

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.





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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 [Childhood 2.0](#), [Inside the Manosphere](#), [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](#).

Please note that the school and wider Trust regularly review Government Policy and expert guidance, and at any time the school can make changes to their Behaviour, Digital Learning & Safety, Mobile Phone, Smart Devices and Social Media policies.

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

Yours faithfully,

Eoin Kelly  
Headteacher

#### Additional Resources

[Agreement of Expectations](#)

[Behaviour Policy](#)

[Digital Learning & Safety Policy](#)

[Smartphone Alternatives for Kids](#)

[Keeping safe online: parent advice and resources library](#)

