

Our journey to becoming smartphone free

The evidence highlighting the harms that smartphones and social media can have on young people is becoming increasingly clear and we are immensely proud of our work at St Lawrence CofE (Aided) Junior School to become a smartphone-free site for all our pupils. Since September 2025 we have held a [Gold Standard smartphone policy](#) with no pupil smartphones allowed on site for pupils. The impact has been incredibly positive.

Our journey began in Autumn 2023 with a fruitful conversation with four eager parents on the school gates. These parents had joined forces with another 125 St Lawrence parents to sign the Delay Smartphone Pact. It was instantly obvious that a plan needed to be implemented in order to change the smartphone culture at the school.

In line with many Primary and Junior schools, children were allowed to bring smartphones onto the school site as soon as they were independently walking to and from school, often as early as 10 years old. The number of pupils doing so was growing year on year.

Unpicking issues of unsavory WhatsApp messages and unwanted photos was thankfully not too common, however did

still present a problem for teachers, leaders, parents and pupils. Children were distracted when such incidents occurred and would find it difficult to switch off during their social times. It was also common for incidents to take place on the journey to and from school. Far from keeping the children safe, smartphones were increasingly making them unsafe and vulnerable.

Timeline of strategy:

Autumn 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders researched the impact of smartphone and social media use in children, including sharing evidence with stakeholders from 'The Anxious Generation' by Jonathon Haidt.
Spring 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil workshops led by Parents Against Phone Addiction in Adolescence (PAPAYA) were organised to develop a deeper understanding of the risks of unfettered access to the internet and social media.
Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Kathy Weston –Tooled Up Education: Criminologist and speaker hosted an impactful talk at St Lawrence school to 200 parents, leaders, governors in local area. • Questions from parents were shared prior to the talk and Kathy addressed them in her presentation. Following this talk, there was a clear call to further

	<p>action from parents.</p>
Autumn 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smartphone Free Childhood parent survey sent to all parents and carers at St Lawrence • 200 responses were received • 89% supported a ban of smartphones • ‘This is the greatest thing we can do collectively for our children’ quoted one father in the survey.
Autumn 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results shared with Governors • Governor vote – unanimously agreed to ban smartphones from September 2025. • BBC interview and article published
Spring 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcement made to parents about incoming ban for all pupils at the school from September 2025 • Headteacher delivered Keynote speech to leaders and Governors at <i>Diocese Heads and Chairs</i> meeting
Autumn 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smartphone free site – Gold Standard policy
Spring 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteacher spoke on BBC news about smartphone free journey at St Lawrence
Summer 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteacher speaking at <i>Wisdom For A Wired World</i> Diocesan conference sponsored by all the Dioceses across the south-east including Guildford.

Legacy

It remains incredibly important to us to continue to share our journey with the wider community so that we can work alongside others in this important area of the curriculum. Many headteachers and leaders have contacted the school to ask for further resources and advice to enable them to successfully roll out smartphone bans in their own settings. We will continue to pave the way for smartphone-free schools in the coming years.