Bridgewater Primary

Together rain or shine

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Dear Parents & Carers,

Mobile Phones at Bridgewater School

Bridgewater Primary School discourages children from bringing mobile phones to school. If a child needs to contact his/her Parents/Carers, the school office will contact them on their behalf. If parents need to contact children urgently, they should phone the school office and a message will be relayed promptly.

- Children in Years 5 and 6, who are walking to school without their parents, have permission to bring a phone to school, so that they can contact their parents in an emergency on their way to or from school.
- The phone must be **clearly labelled with the child's name**, switched off and given in to the class teacher on arrival at school. Phones are then returned by the class teacher to the children at the end of the school day to be put safely into school bags.
- **The phone should be a simple model, which does not connect to the internet. It should not be a smartphone.**
- The phone must be concealed whilst leaving the school premises and children are reminded that it is not safe to be looking at their phones whilst walking to and from school.
- Parents are advised that Bridgewater Primary School accepts no liability for the loss or damage to mobile phones which are brought into the school.
- Where a child is found using a mobile in school, including on the playground, the phone will be taken from the child and placed in the office. Parents will be contacted to collect the phone.
- If a child is found taking photographs or video footage with a mobile phone, of either a child or a teacher, this will be regarded as a serious offence and the Headteacher will decide on appropriate action.
- In certain circumstances, this can be deemed a criminal matter. If images of other children or teachers have been taken, the phone will not be returned to the child until the images have been removed by an appropriate person.

Follow this link to Amazon, for examples of cheap, basic phones.

Smartphone-free Childhood

We have carefully considered the points raised by the Smartphone Free Childhood Campaign, which aims to encourage parents to protect their children from the risks of venturing online.

As a school, we absolutely share the concerns about:

- Exposure to inappropriate material online;
- Addiction to screen time (particularly social media and online gaming);
- Unkind and unsafe behaviours online; and
- Distraction.

Children are being exposed to online material at an ever-younger age, presenting parents with the dilemma of how to protect their children from risk, but allowing them to enjoy the advantages of technology.

We are not in a position yet to enforce a total ban on Smartphones, nor do we feel it would be the solution we are seeking. However, with the support of parents we feel we could minimise some of the risks further.

As parents you can help by:

● Maintaining regular dialogue with your children about their online activity;

● Delaying the purchase of internet-enabled devices (tablets, gaming consoles, Smartphones) for your child until they are at least 14;

● Not allowing your child to wear a Smartwatch to school;

● Following our guidance above and considering a single function device ("brick phone"), which will enable your child to contact you in an emergency, but does not provide internet access.

For those of you with children who do not yet have a Smartphone, if you work together to delay purchasing devices for your children, you might be able to benefit from the lessons learnt by parents who have gone before you. Resist the "pester power" for access to Smartphones, Whatsapp and TikTok, until you feel your children have the maturity and resilience to manage forums designed by adults, for adults.

Schools alone cannot fix this issue by banning Smartphones on site. In fact, we are concerned that if a child gets into difficulty, we want them to feel able to disclose, share and seek support, rather than feel they have done something wrong and risk having their phone confiscated. Parents cannot fix this issue on their own either. Instead, we ask that you work with us to give the pupils in our care the knowledge, skills and attitudes to navigate online challenges.

We hope that you will support the school by following this advice,

Kind regards,

Andrea Bettridge
Headteacher