



22nd July 2025

Dear Parents & Carers

Good afternoon, this is probably my last communication from me this term, but I wanted to start by thanking everyone who took the time to respond to our recent communication regarding the move to being a smartphone free school from September.

What has stood out more than anything is the overwhelming support from the vast majority of families, with the majority of parents going out of their way to thank us for taking a brave and necessary. Some described the changes as a relief, others said they felt grateful, that the school was addressing an issue that they too had been battling at home.

A number of parents shared their own personal struggles, managing smartphone use and its negative impact on their child's focus well-being or sleep. Several also referenced the anxious generation by Jonathan Haite, echoing our concern about the wider societal impact of unrestricted device access. I want to thank all of you who shared words of encouragement and trust in our decision. Your support gives us the confidence to roll out that policy with consistency and compass. I did however, want to respond to some of the questions raised with regard to the collection and storage of phones, confiscation and use of tracking on phones to and from school and phones required for medical or SEN needs.

Collection and storage and return of phones

To ensure a secure and efficient process, phones will be handed in each morning during tutor time. Each tutor group will have its own lockable, storage box with a labelled slot for each student to avoid any mix ups. Phones will be returned during the second tutor period before period 5, ensuring that students can retrieve their devices in good time, although they must remain off and in bags until the end of the school day.

Once our end of day routines are fully embedded, we will transition to returning phones during the afternoon tutor time at the end of period 5, minimising any disruption to after school travel or clubs. Students will have phones before they need to leave at the normal time.

Security, responsibility and safety

All phones will be collected by the tutor, and stored in locked named boxes, stored security during the school day return to the correct student in an organised and supervised way. We will take all reasonable steps to prevent loss, damage or mix ups and students will be reminded to collect their phones before dismissal.

Confiscation policy

Some concerns were raised about the confiscation of phones. Please be assured that phones will only be confiscated if a student uses it during the school day and has therefore failed to give their phone in during morning tutor time. In these cases, parents will be informed in a meeting arranged to discuss the next steps.

I am confident this will not become a significant issue, as the strong support we've received from parents will help reinforce the message to students. With this consistent guidance at home and at school students are likely to understand both the reasons for the change and the benefits it brings, meaning very few, if any, will be in a position where confiscation is necessary.

Although the tariffs of those conversations need to act as a sufficient deterrent, to avoid it having limited or little impact at all.

The use of phones for homework, timetables and Apps

We know that many students use and access SatchelOne, Sparx and other learning tools on their phones, however, they're not needed during the school day and students will still have access to these platforms at home. If you feel your child does not have the right device access at home, please get in touch with their tutor ahead of the start of the new academic year so we can support.

Medical and SEN

Some students require phones as part of a medical or educational support plan EG. diabetes monitoring or reading pens connected via smartphone apps. In these cases, individual arrangements will be made in line with each student's care or support plan and we remain fully committed to supporting the individual needs of all our students.

Travelling and after school logistics

We are mindful that some students have tight travel windows after school, particularly those catching buses like the 685 or heading straight to after school clubs. We will ensure that phone returns happen, with sufficient time before the end of the school day and as I said, move to an end of day return period once line up routines are well embedded.

Consultation

A note on consultation, we appreciate that some parents would have like earlier input into the policy, however, the decision was driven by a growing body of evidence on the risks associated with unrestricted smartphone use, especially in schools. We felt a clear and confident approach was needed and we thank the many parents who recognised the urgency of the change and have supported us in delivering it.

Parent Forum

There will be a parent forum on Wednesday the 3rd of September 5:15pm to 6:00pm for any parents that have any questions about this, or any other aspects of school life and policy ahead of the new school year and I hope to see you there.

Finally, thank you once again for your support, feedback and partnership throughout this year. The strength of positive feeling from parents has confirmed this is not just a school concern, but a community wide problem and with your help, we are confident that Warlingham School will lead the way of making our school environment safer, calmer and most importantly, more focused on learning.

I would like to wish you and your children and families a wonderful summer break and look forward to a really positive return at the start of the new school year. Have a great summer!

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Foster', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Mr P Foster

Headteacher