



10th July 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Introducing a Smartphone-Free School Approach

As your child prepares to attend **Avonbourne Academies**, we are writing to share an important development in our approach to safeguarding and student wellbeing.

At Avonbourne Academies, we seek to empower students to surpass their potential and lead joyful, fulfilled lives. To achieve this, we are committed to ensuring that all students learn and grow in a safe, focused, and positive environment.

As an academy, we firmly believe that smartphones and social media pose a significant safeguarding risk to children. Evidence and professional experience indicate that the negative impact on wellbeing, behaviour, and learning far outweighs any perceived benefits, particularly for younger students.

For this reason, we are moving to a **smartphone-free school site**, beginning with students joining Year 7 in September 2026. This is the first step in a phased, whole-academy approach.

Why We Are Taking This Step

This approach will:

- Improve safeguarding in and out of school
- Reduce exposure to online harm
- Improve focus, behaviour, and wellbeing
- Reduce risks linked to theft and distraction
- Support all families, including those choosing to delay smartphones

We also recognise the importance of helping students develop independence, resilience, and confidence as they transition to secondary school.

What This Means for Year 7 Students

- Smartphones must not be brought onto the academy site
- If a phone is required for travel or for communication before and after school, students must bring a device that has no smart features or camera. These are commonly referred to as “brick phones”.



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Acceptable phones must:

- Allow calls and texts only
- Have no internet access or apps
- Have no camera

Expectations on Arrival at the Academy

Our existing behaviour policy remains in place for all mobile phones (both smartphones and brick phones):

- Phones must be switched off
- Placed in the bottom of the student's bag
- This applies from the moment students cross onto the academy site

In order to uphold this phone policy, there will be sanctions for students who take their phone out in school or who bring in a smartphone and the details of these sanctions will be available in the updated behaviour policy in September.

Further information, including FAQs, can be found overleaf.

Thank you for your support as we work together to ensure a safe and successful start to secondary school.

Yours sincerely,

David Gorvin

Vice Principal

Head of School: Imogen Bull

Executive Principal: Michelle Dyer

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Avonbourne Boys' and Girls' Academies
Harewood Avenue
Bournemouth
Dorset
BH7 6NY

t: 01202 398451

e: office@avonbourneacademy.org.uk

w: <http://www.avonbourneacademy.org.uk>



Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the academy introducing a smartphone-free approach?

Our priority is safeguarding and wellbeing. Evidence shows that smartphones increase risks linked to online harm, distraction, theft, and safeguarding incidents, particularly during journeys to and from school. Schools with similar policies report significant improvements in pupil safety and behaviour.

How will my child stay safe without a smartphone?

Children are statistically far more at risk from online harm than from strangers in public spaces. A basic “brick phone” still allows calls and texts if needed, without exposure to apps, social media, or the internet.

Can I track my child without a smartphone?

Tracking devices (such as AirTags or Tiles) can provide reassurance, but they are not always reliable and do not prevent incidents. Developing independence is an important part of secondary school, and we encourage families to balance reassurance with building confidence.

What if my child needs to contact me during the day?

Students can contact parents through the academy office if needed. Likewise, we will always contact you directly if there is any concern about your child.

Why not allow smartphones but keep them in lockers or pouches?

Lockers and pouches do not address many of the key risks:

- Exposure to harmful content still happens before and after school
- Safeguarding risks during journeys remain
- Devices can still be misused outside controlled times

A consistent approach is simpler, clearer, and more effective.

What about safety on the journey to and from school?

Many safeguarding incidents occur on school transport or journeys. Removing smartphones helps:

- Reduce online risks
- Improve situational awareness (e.g. road safety)
- Make pupils less of a target for theft

Bus cards are available to support smartphone-free travel.

Won't my child be at risk without a phone?

There is no evidence that smartphones make children safer. In fact:

- Children are significantly more likely to experience harm online than in public spaces
- Smartphones increase exposure to grooming, exploitation, and peer-related risks



What about children whose parents don't want them to have smartphones?

This policy supports those families. Allowing smartphones in the academy can expose all pupils to harmful content through others' devices, even if they don't own one themselves.

What type of phone is allowed?

Students may bring a simple "brick phone" that:

- Can call and text only
- Has no internet access
- Has no camera (recommended where possible)

Examples:

- There are many phones that meet our criteria, some examples are: Nokia 105 2G, Samsung E1200, Alcatel 10.16G

How much is this going to cost?

- You can choose a 'pay-as-you-go' package which is 1pm per minute for calls and 1p per text or an unlimited calls and texts package for £4 per month (from Asda Mobile).
- This style of phone is available for less than £20 to buy and are available for less if they are purchased second hand.

Will this help prevent theft?

Yes. Schools that have introduced this approach report fewer incidents of phone theft. When it becomes known that pupils do not carry smartphones, they are less likely to be targeted.

How will this benefit my child?

Students benefit through:

- Improved focus and wellbeing
- Reduced exposure to online harm
- Greater independence and resilience
- A safer environment both in and out of the academy

How will my child complete their homework?

Head of School: Imogen Bull

Executive Principal: Michelle Dyer

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- All the online platforms we use are web-based as well as accessed through apps
- We are not saying that children cannot use smartphones at home; parents decide what happens at home, while we decide what takes place at the academies

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