



# St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

*Head Teacher: Mrs J Foley*



**We love and learn together by growing  
in friendship with Jesus**

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians

I am writing to share with you some information linked to the UK Smartphone Free Childhood (SFC) campaign. SFC is a grassroots movement on a mission to challenge Big Tech's colonisation of childhood. The initiative began through two parents who were concerned that children are receiving smartphones younger and younger. As a parent, they were beginning to feel pressure to buy a smartphone for their own child, as they did not want their child to be the only one left out in their class. They began with a small WhatsApp group where they raised their concerns with friends, which quickly gathered momentum, with other parents airing similar concerns and it grew to having over 60,000 participants within weeks. Here is the [website link](#) to learn more about the campaign.

In the UK, 91% of 11-year-olds have a smart phone and remarkably, almost 20% of four year olds now own one too! Over the past five years, studies have shown (through psychologist Jonathan Haidt) that smartphone use can lead to social deprivation, sleep deprivation, attention fragmentation and addiction. Whilst all of the aforementioned is also harmful for adults, it can be worse for children, whose brains are developing.

Within St Augustine's, teachers deliver online safety lessons and have discussions around safe searches and dangers of the internet. Our devices in school are protected and restricted. This information was shared during the curriculum meetings. We are aware of children accessing inappropriate sites and online gaming at home, where restrictions are not in place. Within three of our KS2 classes, we have data indicating the following; 31 children have their own phone, 12 have had an old one passed on from an older sibling, 78 have an iPad and 22 have laptops. Linked to our digital quiz, it tells us that 24 children use WhatsApp (a 16+ platform), 75 use YouTube (13+), 17 have Snapchat (13+), 13 are on TikTok (13+), 5 are on Instagram (13+) and 2 have Facebook accounts (13+).

Sadly, being part of these social media platforms exposes children to things that they should not see/witness and staff within school, on occasions, have had to deal with the aftermath. Most social media platforms have a minimum sign-up age of 13 years, but Ofcom research also shows that half of children under 13 are on social media. We do appreciate how hard it is to manage everything and to the pressures that everyone faces. It is certainly a new era for parenting and one which we are having to navigate without advice from our own parents. This may make you feel isolated to air your worries, as you may feel that you are the only one.

We are very fortunate to have a parent, Ms Claire Lunham, who has been carrying out research and has already shared information via parent WhatsApp groups. I have been liaising with Ms Lunham since the summer term over ways in which we can provide a place for parents to come together and discuss their concerns, but more importantly, work together for the best interest of our children. Our proposal is to utilise the school hall or sunshine room, set up tea/coffee and host a video to share some key messages, so that you are together afterwards to have a discussion on ways you can support each other and move forward.



**Our Lady and All Saints**  
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In the coming weeks, we will share a date and time and hope that as many of you can attend a video presentation to watch together. The theme of the video shares ideas on how you can delay smartphone use. School would like to thank Ms Lunham for helping to raise this awareness and to be reassured that none of this is to criticise parenting, but simply to raise awareness of the SFC momentum and hope that it is something you can consider to help protect your child in the future.

A report has been issued to parliament by Dr Dubicka, emphasising the concerns about screen use and its link with mental health problems. The DfE are also encouraging phone bans within schools.

According to the Guardian, an online pledge to withhold smartphones from children until they are at least 14 years old has been signed by parents at 20% of schools across the UK. Our school is showing as top of the leader board in the West Midlands, due to parents who are prepared to hold off until Year 9 to give their child a smartphone and reverting to providing them with a phone that can just allow calls and texts! I am sure many of you can remember those days and when life was much more simple!

Sort by: **Leaderboard** School name

Click on your school to see data for each school year

SCHOOL NAME	FACTS
St Augustine's RC Primary school, Solihull ↗	70
St George & St Teresa RC Primary School, Bentley Heath ↗	49
Solihull School, Solihull ↗	19

Throughout the year, we will continue to raise online Safety messages via the newsletter and children will participate in Safer Internet Day (SID), Be Internet legends assemblies and have regular online safety lessons.

We hope that you will welcome this support and we look forward to continuing to work with you across the year. Here is the link, should you wish to sign and agree to the Parent Pact - [Smartphone Free Childhood Sign the Parent Pact.](#)

Yours sincerely

Mrs Foley  
Head Teacher



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