



**CHELTENHAM
BOURNSIDE
SCHOOL**

SMARTPHONE FREE AT KS1, 2 & 3

February 2025

Screens and teens: it's a combination that's become increasingly tricky to navigate over the last decade. This is at the heart of a [fascinating article in the Independent](#) published last year in response to the government's drive to ban mobile phones in schools.

You may have seen the [two-part Chanel 4 documentary, Swiped](#), over the Christmas break. It follows Emma and Matt Willis supporting a research project led by the University of York in challenging a group of year 8 pupils to give up their smartphones for 21 days.

As **Designated Safeguarding Lead** for the school and as a parent of a teenager, I found the findings compelling and the future potentially bleak and troubling for our young people as they grow up. It provides powerful arguments and evidence about how smartphones, and in particular social media apps such as Snapchat and TikTok, can quickly become addictive, dangerously influence your child's thoughts and habits, expose them to harmful and adult content and reduce their emotional and social development significantly. I would strongly encourage you to watch this documentary, alongside your older children. It is not an easy watch, but an important one.

As a school, Cheltenham Bournside has, for several years, embedded a policy that bans mobiles from being heard or seen in the school day. Crucially though, the impact of mobile technology and social media on our young people is not just an issue that is a problem in school. It is about their use and engagement throughout the day, at home, at school and during their social time. It's how they use it to interact with the world they are growing up in and with people they know and those they don't.

These concerns were reinforced by a [significant study](#) that has been reported on by the BBC. Dr Victoria Goodyear, the study's lead author from the University of Birmingham, told the BBC the findings were not "against" smartphone bans in schools, but **"what we're suggesting is that those bans in isolation are not enough to tackle the negative impacts"**. She said the **"focus"** now needed to be on **"reducing how much time students spent on their phones"**, adding: **"We need to do more than just ban phones in schools."**

We strongly believe that we all have a responsibility to teach and help our children manage their online behaviours and relationships and we should all be actively promoting online safety. In our commitment to keeping our children safe, we address these issues regularly within our Education4Life and Computing curriculums.

Over the coming weeks and months, we are committed to further supporting you and your children in changing the norm on smartphone use for the better. In the meantime, we encourage you to watch the Channel 4 documentary, talk with your children and engage with what they are doing online.

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Cheltenham Bournside School is working with local primary schools and parents to encourage the delayed use of smartphones. We have created Smartphone Free at KS1, 2 and 3 to help us achieve our goal.