



Thursday 9th July 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Smartphone ban in Barking and Dagenham schools

As part of our continued commitment to safeguarding, wellbeing and creating the best possible learning environment for all pupils, we are writing to remind you that from **1st September 2025**, pupils at Southwood Primary School have not been permitted to bring smartphones into school in line with secondary schools across Barking and Dagenham who informed all Year 7 pupils that smartphones were not permitted in schools from September 2025 (which has been extended to Year 7 and Year 8 this year). A smartphone is defined as any mobile phone or device that has internet connectivity, social media access, app functionality, or the ability to take and share images online.

As of April 2026, the UK Government introduced a legal ban on smartphones in schools across England, moving from advisory guidance to a mandatory statutory requirement. An amendment to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill will formally require schools to maintain mobile-phone-free environments. The House of Lords supported this amendment to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill in May 2026. Although around 90% of schools already had mobile phone restrictions in place, the new law aims to ensure a consistent approach and uniform enforcement nationwide. Please [click here](#) for further information the guidance.

Previously, the guidance was non-statutory, meaning schools were advised, but not legally required to follow it. Under the new legislation, compliance will become mandatory for all schools. In support of this borough-wide decision and new statutory requirement, Southwood Primary School will continue its no-smartphone policy.

This decision reflects both growing national concern regarding the impact of smartphones on children's wellbeing and the expectations set out within the new Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, which strengthens schools' responsibilities around safeguarding, online safety and promoting pupils' wellbeing. The legislation places a greater emphasis on protecting children from harmful online content, reducing risks linked to social media use, and supporting schools to create safe and focused learning environments.

From September 2025:

- Smartphones must not be brought onto the school site.
- If parents feel their child requires a phone for safety or travel purposes, only a basic mobile phone without internet access (sometimes referred to as a 'brick phone') is permitted.
- Smartwatches with messaging, internet or camera functionality are also not permitted.

Why has this happened?

Although technology can provide benefits, there is increasing evidence that excessive smartphone use can negatively affect children's wellbeing, concentration and social development. National research and safeguarding guidance continue to highlight concerns including:

- reduced attention and focus in lessons;
- sleep disruption and anxiety;
- exposure to harmful or inappropriate online content;

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- online bullying and peer conflict;
- increased social pressures linked to social media;
- risks associated with contact from strangers online;
- reduced face-to-face interaction and social communication skills.

As a school, we want children to enjoy positive friendships, engage fully in learning and develop healthy habits around technology use. We also want to support families in delaying access to smartphones and social media outside of school until children are developmentally ready, in line with legislation expected in Spring 2027. The new measures within the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 reinforce the importance of schools working closely with families to promote children's safety and wellbeing both in and beyond school. We recognise that some families may wish their child to have a device for communication when travelling independently. In these cases, we recommend considering a basic mobile phone without internet access.

We appreciate your continued support and by working together, we can help ensure that all children are safe, focused and able to thrive both socially and academically.

Kind regards,

Scott Halliwell

Further Information, research and resources relating to mobile phone use and young people:

Smartphone Free Childhood

[Smartphone Free Childhood](#)

Unesco Report

[To ban or not to ban? | UNESCO](#)

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