

Clonown N.S.

Keeping childhood smartphone free

Dear Parents/Guardians,

In the context of (i) an increasing awareness amongst educators and mental health professionals that smart phone use is contributing to an increase in anxiety amongst children (ii) a growing awareness of the benefits of delayed ownership of smartphones, the Parents Association and Board of Management is surveying all parents about opting into a 'smartphone-free' voluntary code.

The code is a collective agreement by parents to delay giving their children a smartphone until they leave primary school.

In addition to the voluntary smart phone code we would encourage each family in the school to consider smartphone use by every member of the family and to consider creating your own "family media plan" which might include the following:

1. Committing to mindful use of smartphones by every member of the family, including not using the phone at mealtimes, not using the phone in bedrooms and/or after 8pm and limiting the use of the phone during time spent together as a family. Parents can select the "do not disturb" mode on their phones during these times.
2. Asking visitors to the house to limit their use of the phone to only necessary phone calls whilst they are in the house.
3. Keep face-to-face gatherings free of devices to help build social bonds and promote conversation.

This secondary piece of the agreement allows the children to have ownership of this policy and to keep the adults and older siblings in their lives in check in relation to their own phone use.

The Voluntary Code

We believe that this voluntary code offers parents and guardians who are concerned about their child having personal access to a smartphone a tool to help address the above issues. Collective agreement to hold off on smartphones will reduce peer pressure and provide parents with the data to respond to possible pressure from their children for example “85% of parents have opted in to the No Smartphone Voluntary Code”.

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Key points:

1. The Voluntary Code does not include regular mobile phones (with no internet access) which are used as house phones, if the child is alone in the home, for example. We understand the child may need to make a phone call to family members.
2. All information is anonymous and results will be assimilated by the school as a percentage.
3. It recognises that every family has different priorities and opinions in relation to internet access and smartphone use.
4. If a parent /guardian alters their view subsequently and wants to purchase a personal smartphone devices for their child(ren) they can do so at any stage.
5. It is not a solution in itself to the growing problem but it is potentially one tool which may be helpful to those who wish to avail of it.

How to sign up

If you would like to anonymously sign up to this code please click on the link provided to fill out the short form to show your response to the following:

I agree with the smartphone agreement

Yes or No.

Appendix A

Why are some of the top reasons to make our school smart phone free?

- Smartphones are changing childhood (children who own smartphones are less likely to read/pursue hobbies for example drawing, colouring, playing outdoors etc.)
- Smartphones are addictive
- Smartphones are an academic distraction
- Excessive Smartphones use is altering children's brains
- Smartphones impair sleep
- Screen time impacts behaviour
- Smartphones interfere with relationships
- Smartphones increase the risk for anxiety and depression
- Smartphones put your child at risk for cyber bullying
- Smartphones expose children to sexual content
- Increased social media use is linked to development of eating disorders
- Technology executives ban smartphones for their children