




Mobile Devices

Parents information evening
July 2024

At Abbey Road we are strongly in favour of technology and the wonderful opportunities it provides.



The screenshot shows a website header with a blue navigation bar. On the left is the Abbey Road logo (AR in a yellow circle). On the right are links for Home, Key Information, Parents, Children, and Contact Us, followed by a search icon. The main content area has a yellow background with a large blue oval containing the text "E-safety at Abbey Road" in purple. Below this, there are two paragraphs of text.

Home Key Information Parents Children Contact Us

E-safety at Abbey Road

The internet is a wonderful and powerful tool that has become part of everyday life for children; they have never known a time when the internet did not exist. They use it to research, play games, send messages, talk to friends and family, watch videos and much more.

As a school, we are keen to help children see the positive power of the internet and help them to become digital citizens of a global community. However, we also want them to be educated about the risks involved, the rights they have and the action they can take when something goes wrong.

There are lots of positives...



Online games can enhance teamwork and creativity



Add to the child's store of knowledge



Households with computers perform better academically



Improve both visual intelligence and hand-eye coordination

89% of 8-11 year olds said that using social media made them feel happy and **82%** said it helped them to feel closer to their friends


2020 Ofcom

However, we do not simply want pupils to explore the internet without our guidance.

The analogy has been used of taking your child to visit London: there are wonderful places to visit as well as dangerous places you would want your child to avoid. You wouldn't drop your child off in London and tell them to go explore and figure it out on their own! You would hold their hand and guide them, ensuring they stayed safe. The same is true of the internet.



The 4Cs of online risks

	Content Child engages with or is exposed to potentially harmful content	Contact Child experiences or is targeted by potentially harmful <i>adult</i> contact	Conduct Child witnesses, participates in or is a victim of potentially harmful <i>peer</i> conduct	Contract Child is party to or exploited by potentially harmful contract
Aggressive	Violent, gory, graphic, racist, hateful or extremist information and communication	Harassment, stalking, hateful behaviour, unwanted or excessive surveillance	Bullying, hateful or hostile communication or peer activity e.g. trolling, exclusion, shaming	Identity theft, fraud, phishing, scams, hacking, blackmail, security risks
Sexual	Pornography (harmful or illegal), sexualization of culture, oppressive body image norms	Sexual harassment, sexual grooming, sextortion, the generation and sharing of child sexual abuse material	Sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual messaging, adverse sexual pressures	Trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, streaming (paid-for) child sexual abuse
Values	Mis/disinformation, age-inappropriate marketing or user-generated content	Ideological persuasion or manipulation, radicalisation and extremist recruitment	Potentially harmful user communities e.g. self-harm, anti-vaccine, adverse peer pressures	Gambling, filter bubbles, micro-targeting, dark patterns shaping persuasion or purchase
Cross-cutting	<p style="text-align: center;"> Privacy violations (interpersonal, institutional, commercial) Physical and mental health risks (e.g., sedentary lifestyle, excessive screen use, isolation, anxiety) Inequalities and discrimination (in/exclusion, exploiting vulnerability, algorithmic bias/predictive analytics) </p>			

The link between social media and mental health in young people.

- (US) The younger someone gets a mobile phone, the worse their mental health in later life
<https://sapienlabs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Sapien-Labs-Age-of-First-Smartphone-and-Mental-Wellbeing-Outcomes.pdf>
- (Switzerland) Excessive smartphone use is associated with psychiatric, cognitive, emotional, medical and brain changes in adolescents that should be considered by health and education professionals
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140197121000853>
- (UK) The Millennium Cohort Study states that ‘greater social media use relates to poor sleep, low self-esteem and poor body image’
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31193561/>
- (UK) In the last three years, the likelihood of a young person having a mental health issue has increased by 50% and emergency referrals to youth mental healthcare services have risen by 53%. This has been strongly correlated with smartphone use.
<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/well-being/mental-health-statistics>

Graph taken from 'The Anxious Generation' by Jonathan Haidt

Mental Illness Among College Students

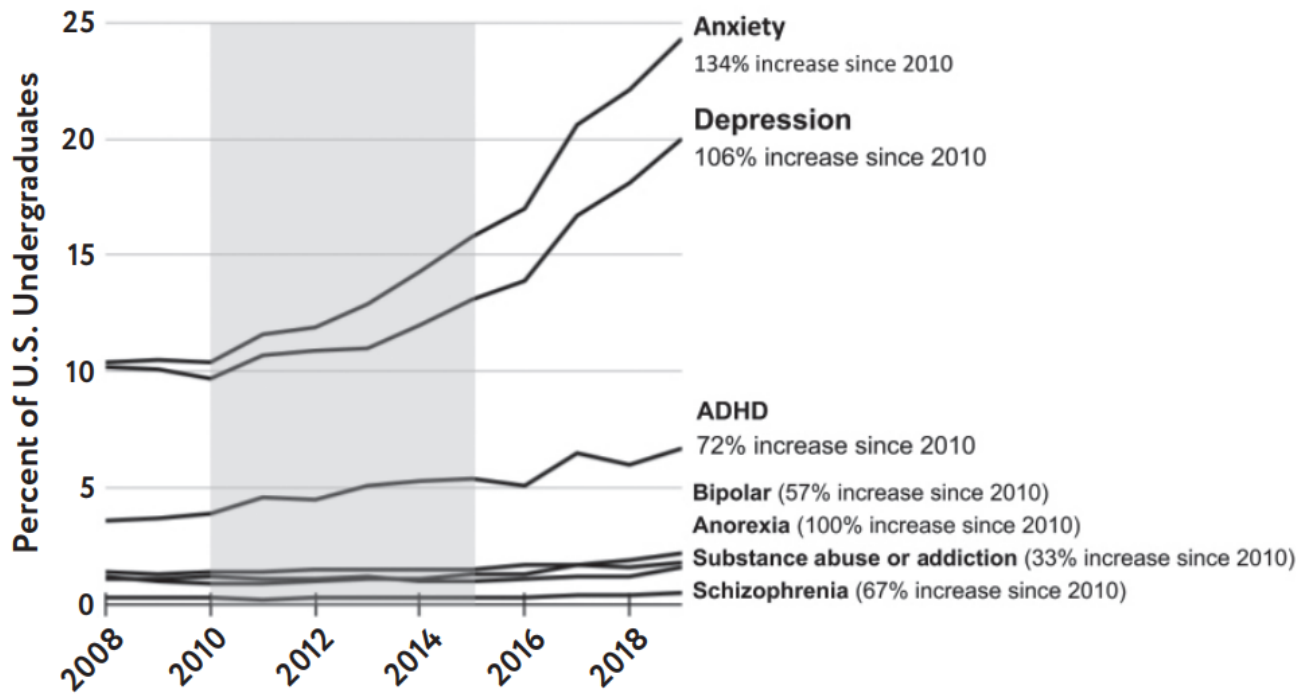


Figure 1.2. Percent of U.S. undergraduates with each of several mental illnesses. Rates of diagnosis of various mental illnesses increased in the 2010s among college students, especially for anxiety and depression. (Source: American College Health Association.)⁹

- The following series of graphs are taken from a book called 'The Anxious Generation', written by an American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt. He has written a series of books about his (and others) concerns about the connection between the introduction of mobile phones on the mental health of young people. Granted, his research is mainly focused on USA but we will see research from the UK also.

- Observation number 1: Levels of these different mental health conditions were somewhat stable until we hit this grey band in the middle, starting in 2010 until 2015. Something happened at that point which triggered this marked increase in anxiety and depression.

- Observation number 2: This graph shows that since that point, conditions such as anxiety and depression have grown significantly whilst other conditions such as ADHD etc have not changed as much. i.e. it is not the case that ALL areas of mental health have been impacted equally.

Mental Illness Among College Students

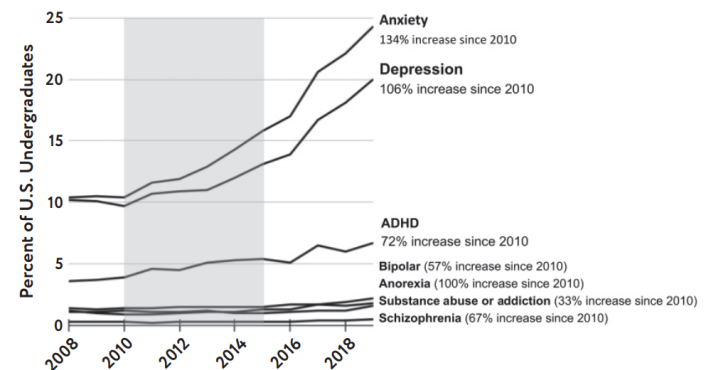


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Graph taken from 'The Anxious Generation' by Jonathan Haidt

Anxiety Prevalence by Age

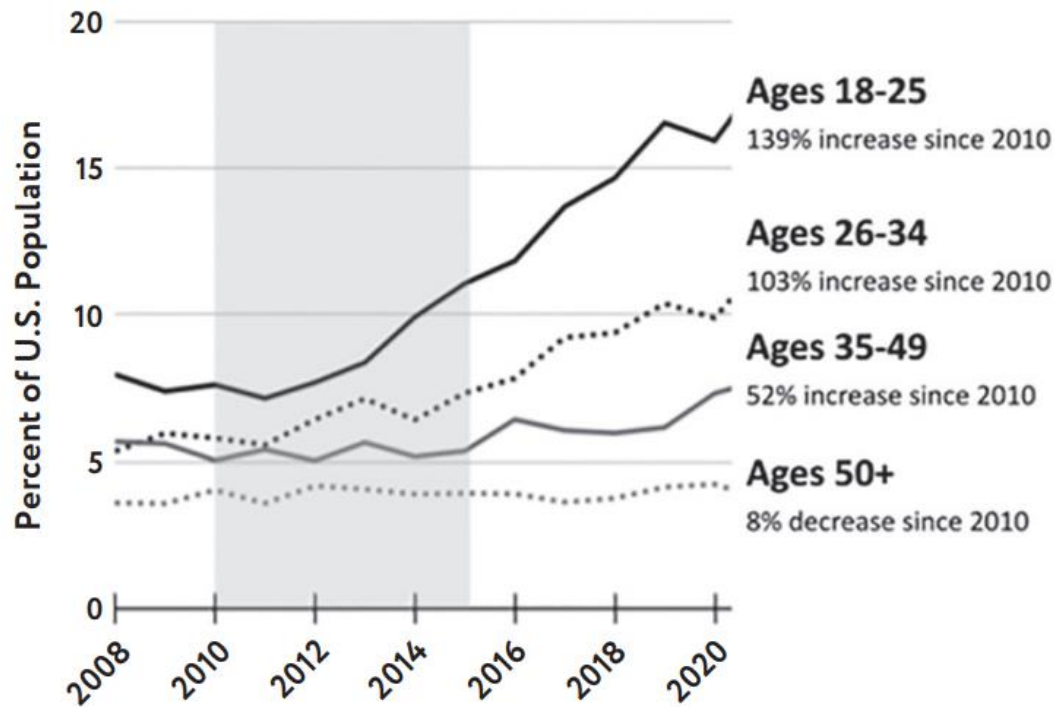


Figure 1.3. Percent of U.S. adults reporting high levels of anxiety by age group. (Source: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health.)¹¹

Graph taken from 'The Anxious Generation' by Jonathan Haidt

Self-Harm Episodes, U.K. Teens

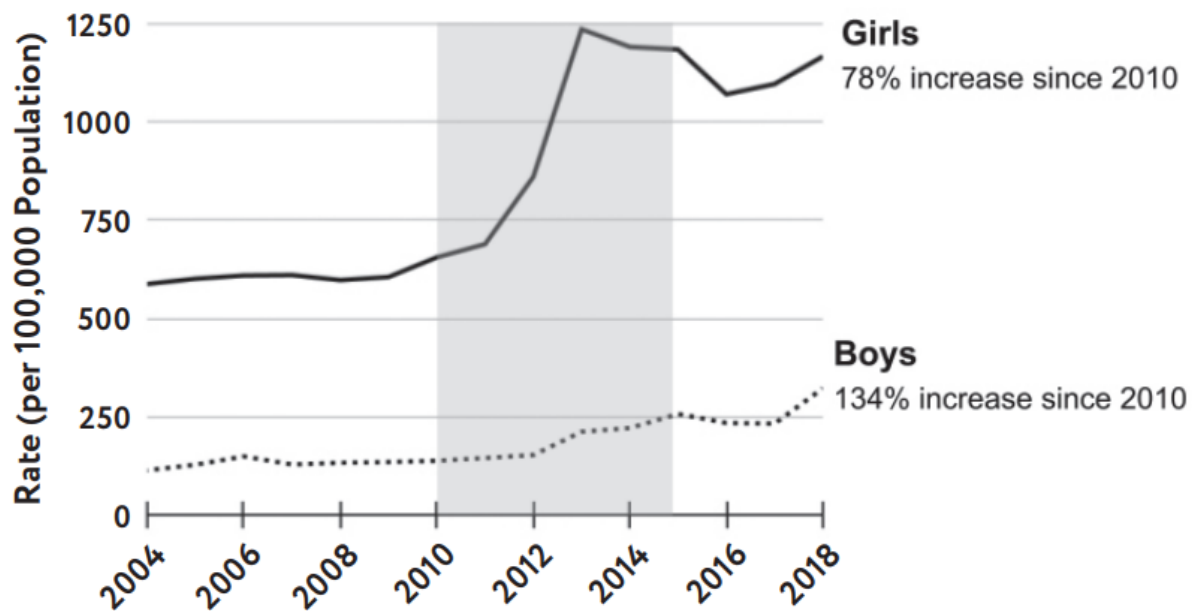


Figure 1.9. U.K. teens' (ages 13–16) self-harm episodes. (Source: Cybulski et al., 2021, drawing from two databases of anonymized British medical records.)⁵¹

Mental Health Hospitalizations, Australia

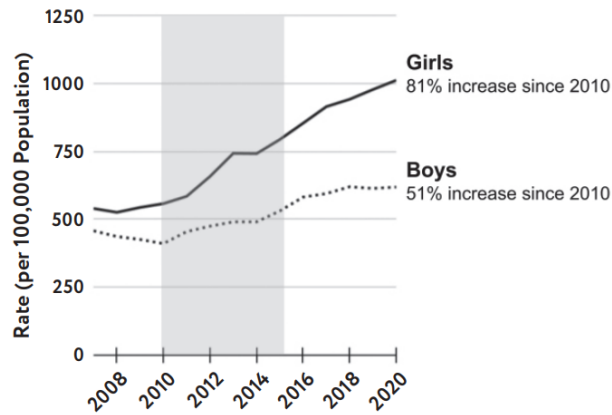


Figure 1.10. Rate at which Australian teens (ages 12–24) were kept in hospitals overnight for mental health reasons. (Source: Australia’s Health 2022 Data Insights.)⁵³

High Psychological Distress, Nordic Nations

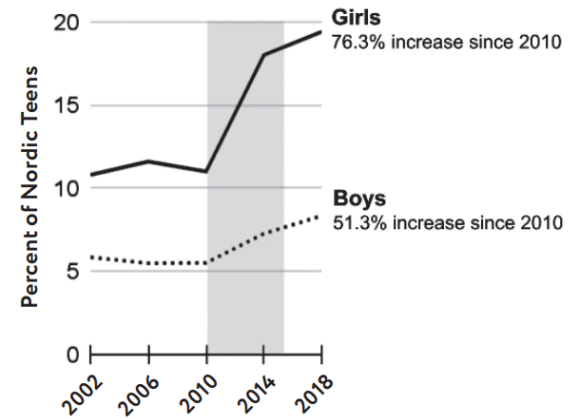


Figure 1.11. Percent of Nordic teens with high psychological distress (ages 11–15). (Source: Data from the Health Behavior in School Age Children Survey.)⁵⁶

Excellent or Very Good Mental Health, Canadian Women

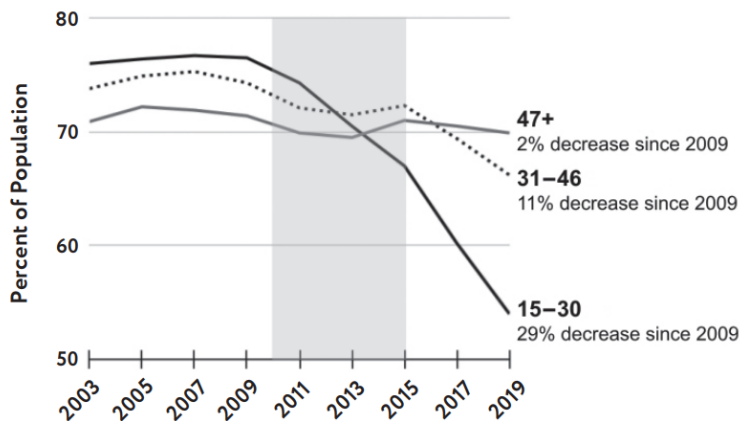


Figure 1.8. Percent of girls and women in Ontario, Canada, who reported that their mental health was either “excellent” or “very good.” (Source: D. Garriguet [2021], Portrait of youth in Canada: Data report.)⁴⁷

- And the data holds up across other parts of the western, English-speaking world too. i.e. it’s not just an American phenomenon.
- Note that the inverse graph from Canada tracks **good** mental health, hence the shape of the curve.
- Again, it is the youngest people who have seen the greatest change.
- Again, it is in that period from 2010 that triggered a change.

Communication Technology Adoption

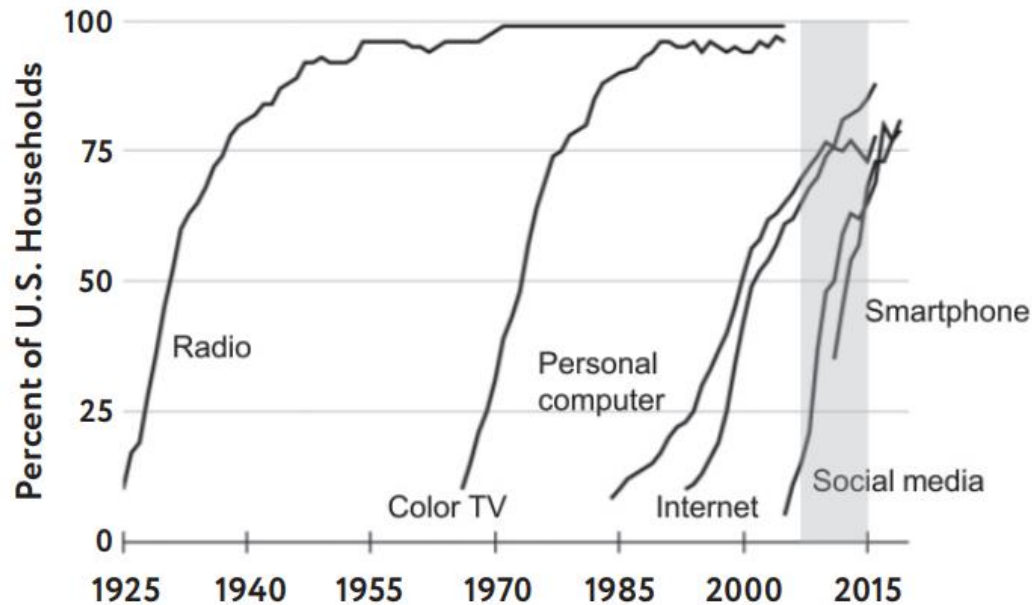


Figure 1.6. The share of U.S. households using specific technologies. The smartphone was adopted faster than any other communication technology in history. (Source: Our World in Data.)²⁵

This graph shows that many new technologies have been introduced over the past hundred years. Each time, the older generation vocalized their concern about the next generation and the woes of this new technology: they're spending too long in front of the TV; their spending too long on their computer. In the 18th century, the older generation had woes over the advent of the novel saying it was too frivolous and would sexualize the next generation. However, none of these advances in technology demonstrate a causal link to the increase in anxiety and depression shown in the previous graphs. Even the introduction of the internet pre 2000 cannot be to blame.

It is the appearance of smart phones and their access to social media, as shown in this graph.

Introducing the overwhelming content associated with social media when the adolescent brain is still forming can be seen to have a detrimental effect on young people.

Communication Technology Adoption

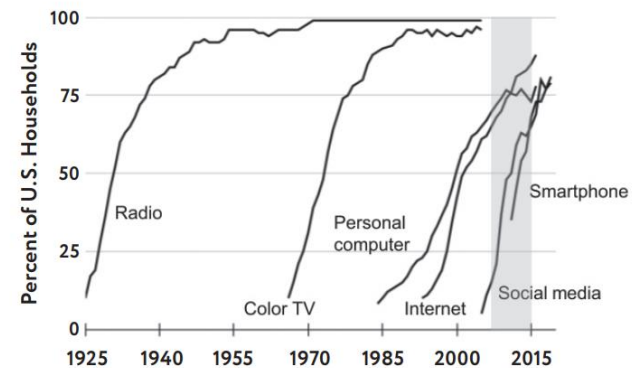


Figure 1.6. The share of U.S. households using specific technologies. The smartphone was adopted faster than any other communication technology in history. (Source: Our World in Data.)²⁵

A small caveat...

Jonathan Haidt recognizes that some other factors are at play here. He mentions children not having the freedom to play that they once had and not being given increased levels of responsibility as they get older.

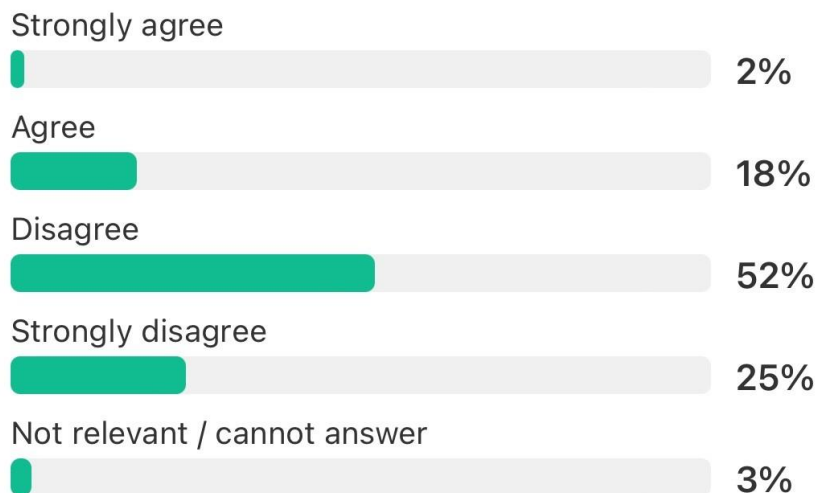
However, he still links back to the fact that some of this can also be blamed for screentime. E.g. Children in Finland are given more outdoor play and freedom than in many other countries and yet even there, the children now go outside, then sit down with their phone.



Backed up by teachers



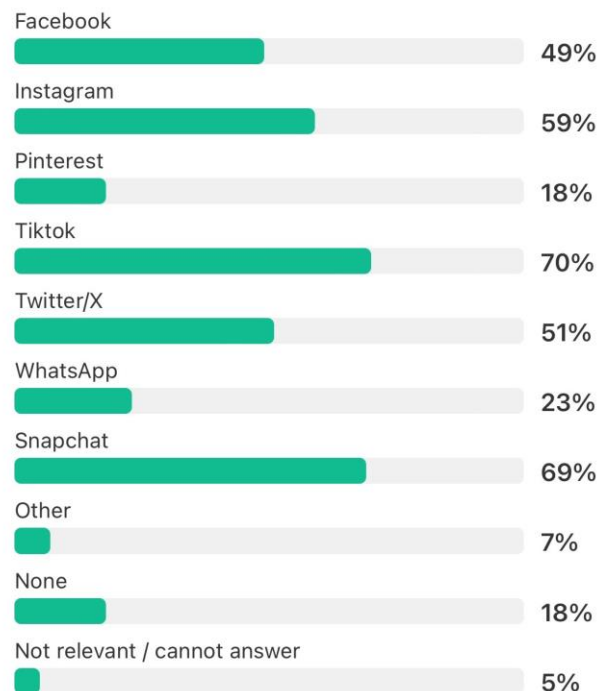
On balance, the benefits of allowing children aged 13-17 to use social media outweigh the downsides for them



11,583 responses on 27th May 2024



Would you like to see a ban on under 16 use of any of the following platforms?



11,632 responses on 28th May 2024

Backed up by others (parents, medical community)



June 22nd 2024



June 18th 2024



June 17th 2024

Dr Vivek Murthy is the most senior medic in America. This week he's recommended that social media comes with a warning label stating that it is **“associated with significant mental health harms for adolescents”**



Adolescents who spend more than three hours a day on social media **face double the risk of anxiety and depression symptoms**, and the average daily use in this age group, as of the summer of 2023, was **4.8 hours**.

Jama Psychiatry, 2019/Gallup, 2023



As a father of a 6 and a 7-year old, he understands that the harms caused by these digital products **can't be solved through people just 'being better parents'**



“These harms are not a failure of willpower and parenting,” he wrote in the New York Times this week. **“They are the consequence of unleashing powerful technology without adequate safety measures, transparency or accountability.”**



“There is no seatbelt for parents to click, no helmet to snap in place, no assurance that trusted experts have investigated and ensured that these platforms are safe for our kids. **There are just parents and their children, trying to figure it out on their own, pitted against some of the best product engineers and most well-resourced companies in the world.**”



Backed up by young people themselves

In a survey of 2,000 13 to 18-year-olds, conducted by BBC Radio 5 Live and BBC Bitesize, young people were asked about various aspects of life - including mental health and their smartphone habits.

The findings of the survey, carried out by polling company Survation, suggest:

23% agree that smartphones should be banned for under-16s

35% think social media should be banned for under-16s





City headteachers suggest banning smartphones for U-14s



In a letter to parents, St Albans Primary Schools Consortium suggested that smartphones shouldn't be given to students until Year 9.

"We know that in our schools some children as young as Key Stage 1 have smartphones," the letter read.

The headteachers added that, while phones can be useful for parents to keep in contact while their children are away from home, phones "do not need to have access to the internet" to keep children safe.

"As head teachers, we have committed to promoting our own schools as smartphone-free."

The letter was signed by 20 of the 24 primary school headteachers in the city.

Research from Ofcom (the Office of Communications) - which oversees TV, radio and internet services in the UK - found that 91% of 11-year-olds own a smartphone in the UK.



May 2024

Dear Parents

I am sure I have met many of you at various Alleyn's events over the past year, but I would like to take this opportunity to re-introduce myself.

I am the Deputy Head Pastoral and I oversee our pastoral provision, structures and systems. I work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and other members of staff with key pastoral roles) to coordinate the School's overarching approach to pastoral care, with the ultimate aim of steering our young people through any challenges ahead with age-appropriate information, education and advice. When crises occur - which sometimes they do - our pastoral team is there to support and guide both students and parents.

I hope your child is looking forward to joining Year 7 in September. There will, no doubt, be many things they are excited about and one of these may be an expectation that they will receive a shiny new mobile phone. The media is full of discussion around their use and the impact of the associated social media on our young people. At Alleyn's we are alert to these risks and do a great deal to educate our students on how to navigate many of the challenges that will come their way. That said, we do feel that the game is somewhat stacked against them and that the best cure in this instance is likely to be one of using some preventative measures.

In the Lower School, phones are locked away at the start of the day and returned to children at the end of the day. Phones are not permitted to be seen or heard on the School site from Year 7 through to Year 11 (there are slightly different permissions for Sixth Form students). Even so, we find ourselves supporting children and parents with the misuse of phones in their own time and we would therefore encourage you to think carefully about the choices you are making for your child over the next few months; what devices you are equipping them with, and what those choices will enable them to access. The School has an evolving approach to how we manage what can be a particularly pernicious challenge for all of us. It is a fast-moving debate, and I can certainly see additional changes or even an overhaul of our approach in the future. For the moment, Alleyn's allows smartphones, but I would not wish you to purchase an expensive item, the use of which we may have to restrict further in the relatively near future.

Instead, we would urge you to consider purchasing a 'dumb phone' for your child to bring to and from school; they do not need a smart phone for school. I try not to draw on my personal life, but I can speak as a parent of a Year 7 child who, on starting 'big school', was less than joyful at being presented with a Nokia 3310 which cannot access the internet or anything more addictive than 'snake'. There was a conversation, of course, and we said the following things:

- The most exciting thing that a phone brings is freedom - freedom to go on the bus to school, to go to Nandos (other restaurant chains are available) with your mates, to walk to the shop, to go to the park. You have all of that with this phone.

- Smart Phones make you vulnerable to the poor decisions of others - 'I trust you, I don't trust everyone else.'
- If you lose your phone or someone 'nicks' it - I'll be a bit grumpy but will be able to buy you a replacement.
- For everything potentially (and very fleetingly) cool you miss, there are 3 things you'll be glad you have nothing to do with.
- If people want you to come to their parties, they'll have to speak to you or make a special effort to invite you.
- You can wear this however you like - ashamed of your OTT Dad or like a kid who knows what really matters - be 'uncommon'. Either is fine, but you can blame me, and I'm good with that.
- It's not forever (16 is what we're shooting for).

So she has a 'dumb phone' - she doesn't miss out on much, she has a friend who teaches her dances from Tik Tok, she absolutely looks at other kids' phones and has said she doesn't like what she sees sometimes. She has embraced being one of the 'care less' kids even though occasionally I have to suffer a begging, pleading, ranting moment. We do look at online stuff together and discuss what is going on, the algorithm and sometimes laugh at dogs doing funny stuff.

I check her text messages and call history once a week if I remember, but if I forget, what's the worst that can happen? I feel like it's liberating as a parent to express trust knowing that the risks for her if I get it wrong are pretty small.

We don't track her - but if we did, we probably wouldn't use a smart phone. It might encourage her to leave her phone somewhere safe while she goes and gets up to mischief somewhere less safe....without a phone!

There is one thing she misses out on ... when I send her a thumbs up, a high five or a laughing face, I receive the reply, 'Dad... I don't see emojis...I just see squares'.

We haven't nailed it, 16 might be over ambitious but what I do see in school is that once our students get the other side of Year 10 there is a significant difference in how young people use their phones and their relationship with their devices changes for the better, so this is what I'm aiming for.

I hope you find this helpful, and that it provides clarity around our approach to managing mobile phone use in School. We really feel that this is a team effort between home and School, and we will appreciate your support and, come September, if we can be of any help at your end in reinforcing healthy mobile phone use amongst our young people, please do get in touch.

In the meantime, I look forward to seeing you at the new parents' evening in a few weeks' time and joining my colleagues in welcoming your child to Alleyn's in September.

With best wishes

Gavin English
Deputy Head (Pastoral)

01. Twyford Church of England High School, *Acton* →

Students all sign a mandatory mobile phone agreement to use only a Nokia 105, Samsung E1200 or Alcatel 10.16G brick phone, which must be switched off in bags all day. If pupils are seen breaking the rule, teachers confiscate the phone till the end of term.



02. Emanuel School, *London*



As of this year, the school is advising parents of new Year 7 pupils joining in September to not buy a smartphone for their child until Year 9. Having run several 4-week trials where they asked pupils to limit social media to 1 hour per day, kids reported feeling happier, less lonely and having improved levels of concentration.



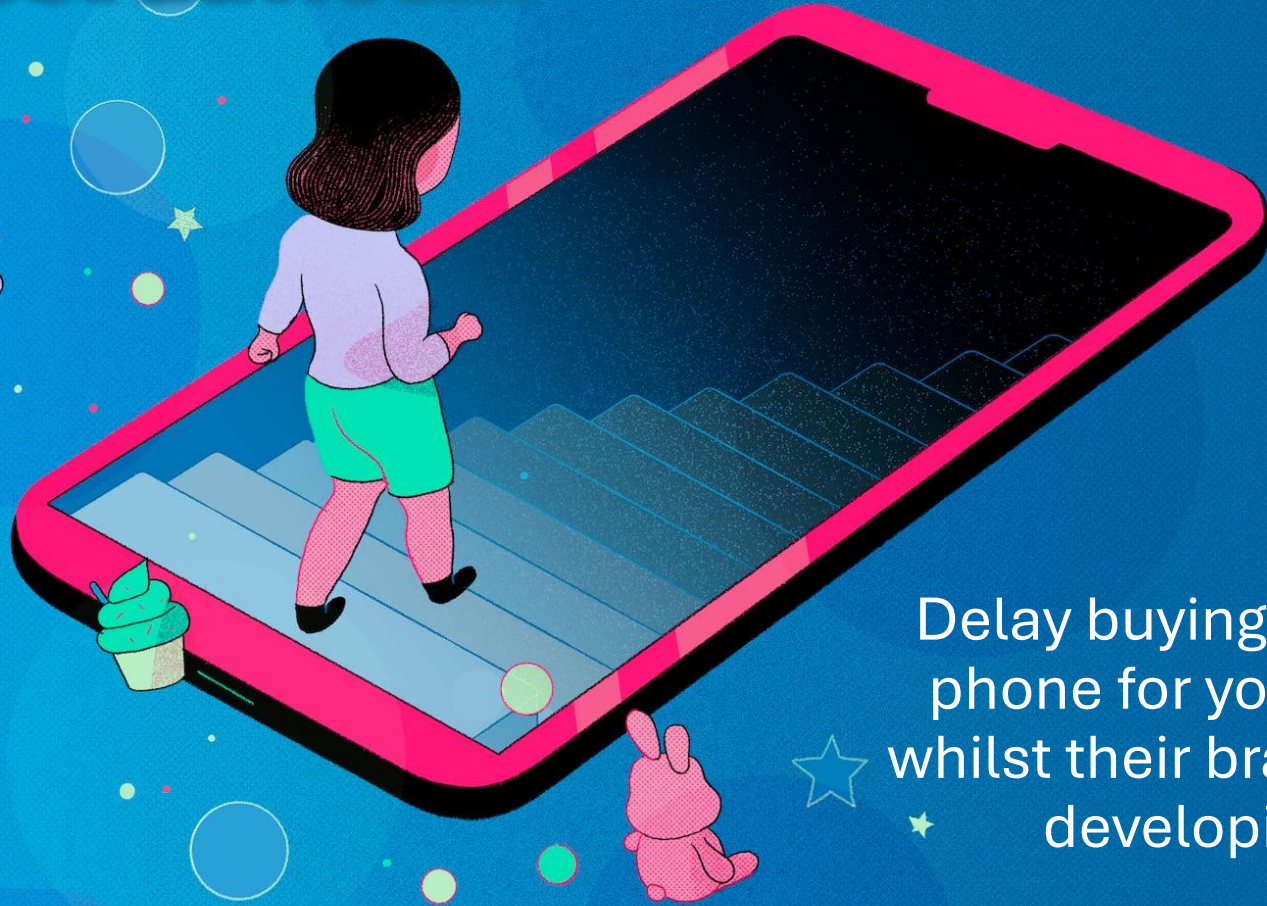
03. John Wallis Academy, *Kent*



In January, the school banned phones in school, meaning all devices must be locked into Yondr pouches for the whole school day. Teachers reported that pupils began playing tag and flirting in the school playground for the first time, instead of looking at their phones.



Our best advice...



Delay buying a smart phone for your child whilst their brain is still developing.

The research recommends Year 9



Great alternatives to smartphones

It often feels like this is an either/or situation. You get your kid a smartphone or nothing. In reality, a good option is to take a step by step approach. Rather than leaping straight in at the deep end with an all the bells and whistles iPhone, we suggest:

01. Start with a children's smartwatch

There are some good options designed for kids.

02. Move on to a simple phone

And a tracker if you want to be able to see where they are.

03. Later (much later!), introduce a tablet at home

Which is yours but they can borrow at controlled times with limits in a communal area of the home, for WhatsApps or similar that you don't want them to be left out. Let them know it's not a private space, you'll be reading their messages and keep an open channel of communication between you about their digital world.

Keep this going for as long as you can hold out for!





[ABOUT](#) [THE PROBLEM](#) [OUR MISSION](#) [RESOURCES](#)

[JOIN US](#)



As parents, how can we talk to each other about this?

[READ MORE](#)

How to introduce the topic in your class WhatsApp

[READ MORE](#)

Letter template to Primary School Headteachers

[USE OUR TEMPLATE](#)

Letter template to Secondary School Headteachers

[USE OUR TEMPLATE](#)

Smartphone alternatives; brick phones, flip phones watches & more

[READ MORE](#)

Our official guide to making a Parent Pact in your school

[SEE OUR GUIDE](#)

Smartphone Free Schools guides for primary & secondary schools

[SEE OUR GUIDES](#)

Our official flyer to circulate amongst parents and schools

[SEE OUR FLYER](#)

Our MP letter template

[USE OUR TEMPLATE](#)

It takes a village to raise a child



This sounds very revolutionary! It is certainly countercultural, but with good reason – some would say the current culture of phones with young teens is not working! No one wants their child to be the one without a smartphone - the stigmatised one standing out as different. You may be convinced by what you have heard this evening but not know how to move forward. It need not be a community-wide agreement - even several families together agreeing would mean that your child would not be the only one without a phone.



**SMARTPHONE
FREE CHILDHOOD**

Abbey Road Primary

WhatsApp group



If you would like to be a part of the ongoing discussion among parents at our school, there is a designated Whatsapp group that has been created by parents here.

Please note: This is not run by or moderated by school.



If your child has (or will have) a smartphone

What steps can you take to avoid the risks and pitfalls we have discussed?

The website internetmatters.org is full of useful information and advice.

Social media is for ages 13 and over

Most social media and entertainment platforms require users to be 13 or older. This includes platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok. Pretending to be older will leave children open to risk.

Many platforms have family or parent modes

TikTok has Family Pairing, Snapchat and Instagram have their own Family Centres and Roblox has Allowed Experiences controlled via a Parental PIN. All of these features are safety tools that you can set up to keep your child safe on their smartphone.

Playing games is a part of socialising

Online games apps like Roblox, Fortnite and Minecraft are often about community and socialisation, not just playing games. The ability to chat and communicate with others means it's important to review in-game safety before they play.

Smartphones have in-built safety settings

Android devices come with Digital Wellbeing while Apple devices come with Screen Time. Individual companies will have additional safety settings -- like Samsung Kids or Google Family Link. Set these features up to improve your child's smartphone safety.

Social media platforms have in-built safety settings for teens

If your teen is honest about their age, they will benefit from additional safety on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Pretending to be an adult means they miss out on these features.

There are a range of messaging apps to follow

WhatsApp is a popular messaging app that children use. However, users must be 13 or older to use it. Additional messaging apps like Telegram might have different age requirements to safety considerations that you should look into.

Setting up filtering can help reduce inappropriate content.

There are three levels to doing this



Your internet/wifi provider (only works in your home)



On the device itself



Within the settings of specific apps

Entertainment & search engines

Select the stream
or other apps from

Social media

Select the social r
from the dropdov

Broadband & mobile networks

Select your network p
dropdown list:

Video games & consoles

Select the video game or console from
the dropdown list:



VIEW ALL

Internet matters have sections that guide you through how to setup parental controls for every type of phone or device imaginable. Each section has a drop down menu where you can find the device or provider you need.

Smartphones & other devices

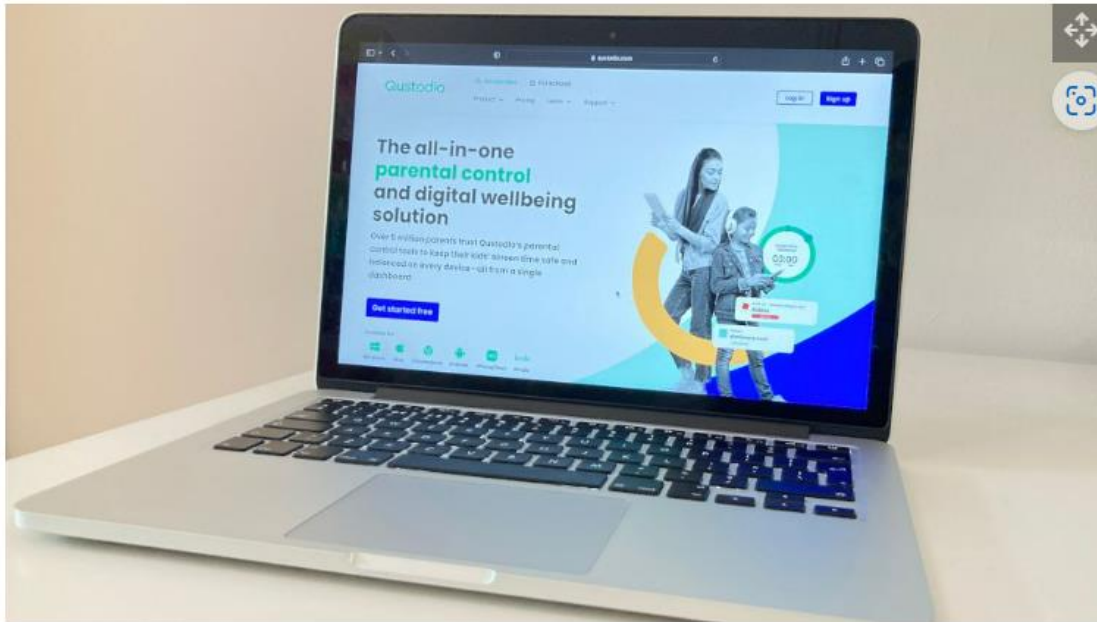
Select the smartphone, other device or OS from the dropdown list:

- Amazon Echo configuration for kids
- Amazon Fire HD guide
- Android Smartphone guide
- Android Tablet guide
- Apple HomePod Family Sharing guide
- Apple iPhone and iPad parental control guide
- Apple's Family Sharing
- ChromeOS safety guide
- Fitbit fitness tracker
- Google Family Link guide
- Google Nest guide
- Kids Safe Mode on Sky Q
- macOS Ventura 13
- OS X Mavericks guide
- OS X Yosemite
- Samsung Family Hub security controls guide



[VIEW ALL](#)

BEST FREE PARENTAL CONTROL APP OVERALL



(Image credit: Future)

1. Quastodio ★★★★★

A full suite of parental control tools to keep your kids safe online

For those looking for a more hands-on approach, sites such as Techradar have reviewed the best apps that you can install on your child's device that will allow you to set certain controls around screen time and filtering. There are multiple free and paid options available.

Setting up filtering is an important step, but online resources such as Internet Matters also focus on the importance of opening up dialogue with your child.

Talk about it:

Tips for a meaningful conversation

- Start conversations when your children won't be embarrassed, for example in the car going home from school. **Try to de-personalise it by asking their opinion on a current news story** that relates to an online issue.
- **Be proactive - don't wait until something has already gone wrong** - discuss issues ahead of time - knowing what children of a similar age are doing will help you know more about the environment that your child is living in.
- **Ask them for advice on how to do something online** and use this as a conversation starter.
- Make sure they know they can come to you if they're upset by something they've seen online - **listen to them when they do and try not to overreact** - the important thing is that they have come and told you!
- **Be sensitive and praise them** when they share their online experiences with you.
- If your child comes to you with an issue, **stay calm and listen without judging them.**
- **Talk about online grooming as you would stranger danger** and explain that people they meet online might not be who they say they are.
- Ask them about things online which **might make them (or others) uncomfortable.**

Dealing with inappropriate CONTENT

What to talk about

- They can come to you if they see anything that upsets them
- If they have seen pornography... that it presents an unrealistic image of sex and relationships
- The importance of respect for each other and the meaning of consent

Top tips / tools to use

- Parental controls on home broadband
- Content lock on mobile networks
- Safe search on Google (& other browsers) & YouTube; child-friendly search engines



internet
matters.org

As well as considering harmful content, perhaps consider encouraging your child to be a mindful consumer of content – not just doomscrolling or falling into the endless blackhole of YouTube or TikTok. We want our children to use their device intentionally.

One of the best ways to approach this is to explain that we want them to use it to **make plans with friends** IN REAL LIFE – not just a device to sit and stare at.

Dealing with inappropriate CONTACT

What to talk about

- Sometimes people hide behind fake profiles for dishonest reasons
- Agree how they will respond to requests from people they don't know in real life
- Never ever to meet up with anyone they don't know in real life

Top tips / tools to use

- Set up safe social media profiles that don't share personal information
- Turn off geolocation settings on devices
- Use the strongest privacy settings on social media
- Learn how to report/block/mute

Dealing with inappropriate CONDUCT

What to talk about

- Talk to a trusted adult if they experience anything upsetting online
- Think carefully about sharing images of others
- Be responsible online, remembering they are creating their own digital footprint

Top tips / tools to use

- Report inappropriate posts/content to the social media providers
- Think carefully about using monitoring apps that identify inappropriate behaviour

Controlling tech time

And there are tactics you can put in place **to help manage** their screen time...

1 Set a good example

2 Talk together about the time spent online

3 Agree on appropriate length of time they can use their device

4 Get the whole family to unplug & create screen-free zones

5 Use technology/apps to help manage screen time e.g. Forest App



Controlling tech time

Your children will be watching the way you use technology and they will copy; make sure there is some consistency in how you **role model** good behaviour:

1 Turn off notifications on apps to avoid that constant 'ping'

2 Buy an alarm clock so you don't have devices in the bedrooms

3 Keep phone on silent in your pocket or bag when you pick the kids from school

4 'No phones at the table' rule or 'no phones between 6 and 7' rule

5 Family tech-free days!

