



September 2026

## Vyners School: Year 7 Smartphone-Free Guide for Parents and Carers

At Vyners School, we are committed to providing an environment that supports your child's wellbeing, learning, and personal development. This guide outlines our new smartphone-free school day for all Year 7 students and provides research-based advice for managing digital use at home.

### 1. Why a Smartphone-Free Environment?

We are joining a growing movement of schools making this change to support student growth during the vulnerable teenage years. With increasing support from central government to ban social media and smartphones, we firmly believe that this change will support us with the following:

- **Supporting focus and learning:** Smartphones are designed to capture attention and reduce students' ability to concentrate, increasing distraction and cognitive load. Removing them creates calmer classrooms where students engage more deeply with learning and activate their own ability to think.
- **Protecting mental health:** Research links extensive smartphone use to anxiety, depression, and disrupted sleep. Developmentally, young brains are not yet ready to navigate the unfiltered world of social media.
- **Encouraging healthy social development:** Without the distraction of a screen, students are more likely to collaborate and form meaningful, face-to-face relationships during a vital transition year.
- **Increased awareness on the journey to and from school:** Not staring at a smartphone on their journey to and from school will ensure that your child is more aware of the environment around them and more attuned to any potential danger. They will also be able to notice and experience their environment and talk with friends on their journey.
- **Reducing online risks:** Delaying access helps protect children from cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and the well-publicised risks of communication with strangers.
- **Creating an inclusive culture:** A smartphone-free environment removes the social pressure related to device ownership, apps, and online status, ensuring every student feels included.

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**Vanguard Learning Trust**

Registered in England and Wales Number 07796938

Registered address - Field End Junior School, Field End Road, Eastcote, Middlesex, HA4 9PQ

## 2. What it Means in Practice

Starting in September 2026, the following rules apply to all Year 7 students:

- **No smartphones or smartwatches:** These are not permitted on school grounds and should not be in bags or pockets. This includes any device with internet access, cameras, or downloadable apps. To tell the time, students must wear a traditional wristwatch.
- **"Brick" phones only:** If your child needs a phone for travel safety, they may bring a basic feature phone (calls and texts only, no internet, e.g., Nokia 105). These must still be turned off and kept out of sight during the school day.
- **School trips:** These rules extend to all day and residential trips to ensure students remain focused on the experience and their peers.
- **Digital tools:** We will continue to teach responsible IT usage through our curriculum and provide school Chromebooks for learning and engaging with the appropriate digital tools. Our aim is not to remove technology, but to ensure that it is introduced at the right time, in the right way, and with the right safeguards.

## 3. Advice for Parents: Managing Technology at Home

The way parents act directly influences how children navigate their teenage years. We recommend the following:

- **Delay access:** Follow the direction of travel outlined by the government and ensure that your children don't use smartphones at home until the age of 16. You may find these links helpful [Smartphone Alternatives for Kids](#) / [Smartphone Free Childhood Resources for Parents](#)
- **Use parental controls:** If your child already has a smartphone and will be keeping this at home, use settings to:
  - Disable app stores to prevent unauthorised downloads.
  - Set downtime during school hours (8am to 4pm) and overnight (9pm to 7am).
  - Turn off all notifications to reduce constant distractions- except maybe text messages from you.
  - Disable all app stores so that they cannot download apps – vet all apps carefully.
  - Disable all mobile access to the internet.
  - Disable the cameras.
  - Actively manage privacy settings so their data is secure.
- **Model good habits:** Put your own phone away when you are with your child to model healthy digital boundaries.
- **Open communication:** Regularly sit down as a family to discuss the dangers of the internet and talk about cyberbullying so they know how to block and report issues.

The [Safeguarding Snapshot](#) page on our school website is also full of helpful advice.



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#### 4. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **How do I contact my child in an emergency?** As is currently the case, in the event of an emergency please call the school office, and a message will be relayed to your child. Do not message your child directly during the day. Students have access to Student Services if they have any concerns of their own.
- **Can I still track my child's location?** Yes. Internet-enabled tracker tags (like Apple AirTags or Tiles) are permitted in school bags.
- **What if my child has a medical need?** Exemptions for medical apps (supported by an Individual Health Care Plan) will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please contact your Year Leader to discuss this.
- **What happens if a student brings a smartphone into school?** The phone will be confiscated and stored securely. Sanctions will be issued in line with the school's behaviour policy.
- **What if the smartphone is turned off and in their bags all day?** It is still not acceptable to bring in smartphones; the school will exercise the right to search students where we have reasonable grounds to do so in line with [official DfE guidance](#).
- **What if I disagree that my child's phone has been confiscated?** We ask you to support the school's policies and decisions.

We believe that it's never too late to take back control; we understand this is a shift for some families, but we believe standing firm now will benefit your child's long-term wellbeing. Thank you for your support in advance. We are confident that, one day, your children will thank you for it too.

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