

# Keeping childhood smartphone free

Harcourt Terrace Educate Together National School (HTETNS)  
Parent/Guardian-Teacher Association (PGTA)

16 March 2024 v2.0



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## What's the purpose of this document?

A subcommittee of the Parent/Guardian-Teacher Association (PGTA) of Harcourt Terrace Educate Together National School (HTETNS) came together in January 2024 with the initial objective of providing feedback on the school's smartphone and smart device policy. As we researched the topic we came to support the idea of **making our school smartphone free**. We are aiming to engage the highest number of parents as possible in our school to **rally together to delay giving our children a smartphone until at least the end of 6th class**. We place the **well-being of our children** at the core of our effort, **we want to protect them from the distractions and the dangers of owning a smartphone at an early age**. These devices are quickly changing childhood for children. Playing outdoors, spending time with friends, reading books and hanging out with family is being squeezed by hours of tiktoking, instagramming, and catching up on YouTube. **Let's help our kids be kids for as long as they need to**.

## Who is this document for?

This document was initially aimed **at parents of children at HTETNS**. We also think it might be of interest to **parents of other schools considering making their school smartphone free**.

## What are the Government's recommendations and guidelines?

The members of the Subcommittee are driven by the recommendations and guidelines launched by the Irish Department of Education. They've launched a plan to encourage parents to **avoid buying smartphones for their children in primary schools**. They also **encourage parents to take collective action around smartphones in our school communities**. By creating a voluntary agreement among our school parents around the use of smartphones and signing a collective voluntary agreement together will help **decrease the pressure to have a phone at this early age**.

[Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free.pdf](#)

## Who have we been inspired by?

You may have read about the "**It takes a Village**" initiative in **Greystones, Co. Wicklow**: students, parents, and schools came together to **agree that their children will not have a smartphone until the end of 6th class**. This has been a **voluntary, grassroots initiative** among all 8 primary schools in both Greystones and Delgany, centred on open discussion, education, and wellbeing in its broadest sense.

[Greystones parents agree to 'no smartphone' code for children until second level – The Irish Times](#)

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Closer to home in Dublin city Ranelagh Multi-Denominational School (RMDS) put in place a similar [voluntary collective agreement in 2021](#).

**Globally**, and noticeably so since the start of 2024, **there are now movements in many countries promoting the idea of delaying giving children smartphones until a later age** - i.e. [Wait Until 8th](#) in US.

Appendix A contains a copy of a sample [covering letter to parents about a voluntary collective agreement](#).

Appendix B has another [example of a voluntary agreement \(Greystones\)](#).

What are some of the top reasons to make our school smartphone free?

**1. There are some clear reasons with references to evidence [here](#), summarised below:**

- Smartphones are changing childhood.
- 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

**2. We've collated a selection of [testimonies from parents of children in Dublin schools that are not smartphone free \(Appendix C\)](#): these give insights into the kinds of tragic incidents that have been occurring involving children and parents in such schools.**

**3. We identified a range of [smartphone Child safety issues \(Appendix D\)](#), backed up by verifiable research sources.**

**4. You can also read [further selected quotes and links \(Appendix E\)](#) on this topic.**

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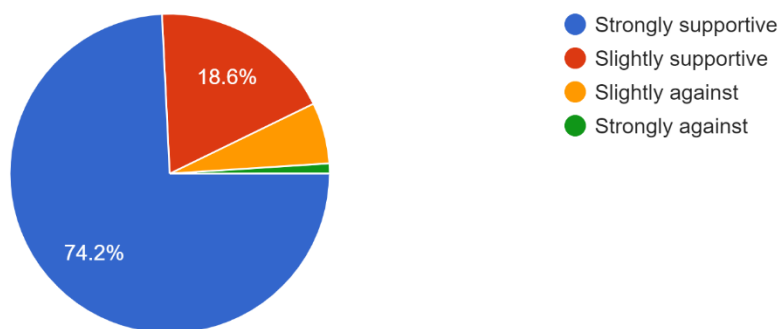


## What do HTETNS parents think about making our school smartphone free?

We undertook a survey of parents of children in our school, which showed overwhelming support for a voluntary collective agreement to delay buying smartphones for our children.

Regarding the idea of a collective voluntary agreement to defer buying our children a smartphone until a defined age I would be:

97 responses



[Appendix F has the full results of the smartphone survey of HTETNS Parents.](#)

## What are some alternatives to smartphones?

We understand that some children may need to be able to communicate with family and friends, especially on their way to school and home. However, there are **alternatives to smartphones that don't carry the same risks**, e.g. old-style "dumb phones".

## Where do we go from here?

The HTETNS PGTA Smartphones sub-committee is **recommending to other parents that we implement a voluntary collective agreement to defer giving our children Smartphones until they go to secondary school**. This approach needs to be **supported by education and awareness of the benefits, risks and mitigations around smartphone use**, to help **prepare children and their families** for the time when they are ready to have access to their own smartphone.

Our school Board of Management is due to consider a policy of **making the school "Smartphone free", unless on an exceptional basis**.

We are looking into holding **an event for parents** to try to **answer any questions or concerns**.

For PGTA's at other schools we hope this has provided some useful information and ideas about what you can do to **try to make your own school smartphone free**.

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## Appendix A – Sample Covering letter to Parents Regarding the Voluntary Collective Agreement

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 PA surveyed 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.

The voluntary smart phone agreement complements the mandatory school policy regarding mobile phone use which states that students are not permitted to use phones during school hours or on the school premises.

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 4th class 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.
2. All information is anonymous and results will be assimilated by class group 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 below to fill out the short form to show that you agree to the following:

"I / We, as parent (s) or guardian (s) of a child or children in [School], agree not to permit my / our child (ren) to own a personal smartphone device up to and including 6th class. We also commit to devising a family policy around the use of all smart phones in our household, by all members of the household. We will tell visitors to the household about our policy and ask them to also respect our boundaries around smartphone use"

*[Link to Collective Agreement form]*

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## Appendix B – Example Voluntary Agreement (Greystones)

<https://freeonlinesurveys.com/s/ePZia7Cm>

As parent(s) or guardian(s) of a child or children at St. Patrick's National School, I / we support the Smart Device policy.\*

Please note that, if you wish, there is the opportunity to add comments later at the end

|                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Yes <input type="button" value="Y"/> | No <input type="button" value="N"/> |

Press ENTER

Which class(es) is/are your child(ren) in currently?\*

Please select all applicable

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Class 1 Eider        | <input type="checkbox"/> B Junior Infants Maple | <input type="checkbox"/> C Junior Infants Chestnut |
| <input type="checkbox"/> D Senior Infants Aspen | <input type="checkbox"/> E Senior Infants Ivy   | <input type="checkbox"/> F 1st Class Ash           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> G 1st Class Oak        | <input type="checkbox"/> H 2nd Class Pine       | <input type="checkbox"/> I 2nd Class Beech         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> J 3rd Class Elm        | <input type="checkbox"/> K 3rd Class Larch      | <input type="checkbox"/> L 4th Class Laurel        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> M 4th Class Cedar      | <input type="checkbox"/> N 5th Class Holly      | <input type="checkbox"/> O 5th Class Hazel         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> P 6th Class Willow     | <input type="checkbox"/> Q 6th Class Birch      |  |

Press ENTER

If you would like to add any comments or feedback to your response please do so here.

We welcome any thoughts that you would like to share

Press ENTER



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## Appendix C - Testimonies from parents of children in Dublin schools where smartphones are not smartphone free

Collected in interviews by PGTA Smartphone Sub-committee February 2024

### **L McD. Parent of kids in primary school Dublin this issue started in 4Th class**

“Started very simple. There was a chat being set up about a project in school. The daughter asked for access as it was a school project she was part of. The Mum joined using her own number as her daughter does not have a phone or a WhatsApp acc. The other children in the group did not realise it was the Mum’s phone. She received loads of messages quite late into the night and she couldn’t believe the content. There was bullying, a lot of homophobic content, name calling comments on other people in the group The parent brought it to the attention of the parents in the parents’ WhatsApp group. There was a lot of comments from many parents whom all started fighting; the parents have been fighting ever since, it has caused huge problems in the school.”

### **L McD Dublin primary school 5th class**

“In the same school A parent had taken the phone from their child for the night and she was really bothered by the number of messages coming in very late when she looked at the messages, she was shocked at the content, which was graphic, lots of abusive messages and bullying messages with foul language. She screenshot the messages and put them in the parents WhatsApp with the names of the kids on them This caused uproar because it identified the kids and also when brought to the attention of the Principal they ended up having to get the Gardaí involved and it is currently ongoing. The Principal has been quoted as saying she feels like she is spending all of her time on these issues.”

### **T D Parent of a child in a Dublin Primary school 6th class**

“Parents agreed not to buy smartphones for the kids before they finished primary school (Not a signed agreement just the parents of this group of girls). Two of the parents broke the agreement and bought them the Christmas of 6th class. The daughter is part of a friendship group of 6/7 girls. Two more parents caved and got phones at Easter as their kids felt left out, they were all videoing themselves and each other and posting to Tic Toc and Snapshot.

“The other girls were excluded from plans and isolated. The girls were posting images online and also including images of the kids who do not have phones. The other parents found out about this and were furious and the parents started fighting as well. It became a problem in the class and the school had to get involved. It was a headache for everyone. The friendship group broke up over it, the parents fell out with each other and the school. It was an unhappy end after all the great years they had had together in school.”

### **K C parent of a child in a Dublin Primary school 5th class**

“The children in fifth class were videoing in school secretly and posting the content online and on group chats like WhatsApp and Snap Chat and making memes. Quite a large contingent of the class ending up being involved lots of people posting comments etc/ Lots of comments on body shapes, racist and sexist comments. It became very serious creating a headache for the Principal, the parents and hugely for the kids.”

### **Principal of a school in Dublin**

“This is a secondary school where the Principal has a phone in their bag policy. If the student is caught using the phone the school can confiscate the phone, but they must give it back

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before the students leave the school, because the school had issues with some students and parents regarding the legalities of confiscating the phones. If they took the phones off the kids, then the problem is if anything happened to the kids on their way to and from school that the school had a responsibility as they took the smart phones. They also have huge problems with unwanted and inappropriate messages being sent during school time. The school teacher or Principal have no rights to look at the student's phone legally without the parent or guardians' permission, so they find it an impossible and frustrating situation to deal with."

## **D C parent 5th and 6th class school in Cork**

"The Dad is in tech he had set up all the parental controls They talked about responsibility and all the problems regarding smartphones and going online etc. He got the phone in 6th class, like his friends. The child bypassed the parental controls within minutes and was looking at porn that evening and sharing with his school friend. They took away the smartphone and revisited responsibility conversations etc. they waited awhile and eventually allowed it again and he was doing the exact thing again within hours. He and his friends were sharing inappropriate images and showing them to each other in their school (where they are allowed in their school bags".

## **AK schoolteacher All Boys School**

"The rules in this school are for 5th and 6th are that "phones can be in bags but should be turned off." In theory this might work but in practice I spend half the day asking people to turn off the phones you can hear it vibrating or message dings or updates, it is a constant distraction How hard it is to keep people on task phones ringing texts coming in? It takes about 25 minutes after an interruption to get their attention back to the original task."

## **H T Parent of 6th class Dublin school**

"Kids are allowed smartphones in 5th and 6th but turned off in bag. This child does not have a smartphone however on the school tour another kid sitting beside them showed them pictures that upset and confused them. The child told the parent, and she contacted the school, the school had to sort this out as other kids were also shown and upset by the images seen on the school tour."

## **H T Parent of child in 6th class Dublin school**

"The child came home and told the parent how upset they were as one of the kids had been filming the kids changing in the locker room and posted images making fun of the kid's bodies. This issue is ongoing and has been dealt with by the school and by the parents, but it has caused a lot of unnecessary upset for all and difficulties between the parents and school".

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## Appendix D – Smartphone Child safety issues

- Three quarters (74%) of teachers surveyed in Ireland said online safety is a significant issue in their school.<sup>1</sup> The majority said the problem was growing.
- A primary school in Ireland recently reported to CyberSafe Kids that 6<sup>th</sup> class students using an online platform were sharing images of a toddler being abused by an adult and other problematic material.<sup>2</sup>
- Less than an hour after researchers started a TikTok account posing as a 13-year-old girl who views mental health content, TikTok started to show the child videos glamourising suicide.<sup>3</sup>
- A separate study found that TikTok pushed eating disorder, self-harm, suicide and content within a few minutes.<sup>4</sup> A new TikTok account set up by a 13-year-old user that views and likes content about body image and mental health will be recommended that content every 39 seconds.
- Nearly three quarters of problematic<sup>5</sup> YouTube content seen by more than thirty seven thousand test volunteers was shown to them because it was pushed at them by YouTube's own recommender system.<sup>6</sup>
- Facebook, Instagram, and X were shown to push hate and conspiracy in children's feeds.<sup>7</sup>
- YouTube routinely pushes very extreme misogynistic hateful material in to boys' feeds.<sup>8</sup>
- The U.N. said Meta played a "determining role" in Myanmar's 2017 genocide.<sup>9</sup>  
This month, lawyers for Rohingya refugees put the blame on Facebook's recommender system, which they said "magnified hate speech through its algorithm".<sup>10</sup>
- Almost half (40%) of surveyed Irish children said they had experienced bullying on these platforms.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Trends and usage report, academic year 2022-2023", Cybersafe Kids (URL: [https://www.cybersafekids.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CSK\\_Data-Trends-Report-2023-Web-Version-Final.pdf](https://www.cybersafekids.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CSK_Data-Trends-Report-2023-Web-Version-Final.pdf)).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "Driven into the darkness", Amnesty International, 7 November 2023 (URL: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/11/tiktok-risks-pushing-children-towards-harmful-content/>).

<sup>4</sup> Deadly by design, Center for Countering Digital Hate (URL: [https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/CCDH-Deadly-by-Design\\_120922.pdf](https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/CCDH-Deadly-by-Design_120922.pdf)), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> "YouTube Regrets: A crowdsourced investigation into YouTube's recommendation algorithm", Mozilla, July 2021 (URL: [https://assets.mozoproduct.net/network/documents/Mozilla\\_YouTube\\_Regrets\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.mozoproduct.net/network/documents/Mozilla_YouTube_Regrets_Report.pdf)), pp 9-13.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> "From Bad To Worse: Amplification and Auto-Generation of Hate", ADL, 16 August 2023 (URL: <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/bad-worse-amplification-and-auto-generation-hate>).

<sup>8</sup> Algorithms as a weapon against women, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, April 2022 (URL: <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Algorithms-as-a-weapon-against-women-ISD-RESET.pdf>).

<sup>9</sup> U.N. investigators found that Meta played a "determining role" in Myanmar's 2017 genocide. Amnesty International reported Meta's algorithms were key contributors. See "U.N. investigators cite Facebook role in Myanmar crisis", Reuters, 12 March 2018 (URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-facebook/u-n-investigators-cite-facebook-role-in-myanmar-crisis-idUSKCN1GO2PN>) and "The social atrocity: Meta and the right to remedy for the Rohingya", Amnesty International, 2022 (URL: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA16/5933/2022/en/>), pp. 45-48, p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> "Rohingya Refugees File Petition Against Facebook in Indian Court", Voice of America, 3 February 2024 (URL: <https://www.voanews.com/a/rohingya-refugees-file-petition-against-facebook-in-indian-court-7470093.html>).

<sup>11</sup> "Trends and usage report, academic year 2022-2023", Cybersafe Kids (URL: [https://www.cybersafekids.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CSK\\_Data-Trends-Report-2023-Web-Version-Final.pdf](https://www.cybersafekids.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CSK_Data-Trends-Report-2023-Web-Version-Final.pdf)).

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## Appendix E – Selected Other Quotes and Links

- [US Surgeon General Warns Social Media Poses 'Profound Risk' to Mental Health of Kids](#)

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy. “Children are exposed to harmful content on social media, ranging from violent and sexual content, to bullying and harassment. And for too many children, social media use is compromising their sleep and valuable in-person time with family and friends. We are in the middle of a national youth mental health crisis, and I am concerned that social media is an important driver of that crisis – one that we must urgently address.”

- [Unesco calls for global ban on smartphones in schools](#)

The recent Global Education Monitoring report funded by UNESCO warned that:

*“the use of technology is associated with negative impacts on physical and mental well-being and increased susceptibility to online risks and harms, which affect academic performance in the long term.”*

- [Smartphones and social media are destroying children’s mental health – The Irish Times](#)

- [Call for mobile phone ban in schools due to evidence of damage to young people](#)

“direct causal relationships between increased access to mobile phones and social media, along with increases in suicide ideation, self-harm, anxiety and many other issues that our mental health services have to deal with”.

“As a parent with children in both primary and secondary school, yes, I see no reason why any child in school needs access to a smartphone,” he said. “We know that they are damaging some children and we know they’re damaging some children quite badly.”

- [Greystones joins It Takes A Village movement - and features on Fox News | Independent.ie.](#)

Greystones resident Justyna Flynn, a clinical psychologist, told Fox News's Fox & Friends programme, that the town had received "incredible" support over the measure.

"It was just the striking results of the rising anxiety, depression and everything we noticed ... of having a mobile phone, especially among young kids," Flynn told Fox.

"I think the access the kids have to the internet, or the internet having access to our children –we don't know what's going on there.

"The brain is not developed [for children] ... their use of the phone is associated with anxiety, depression, obesity, sleeping disorders and many other health problems," Flynn explained to a huge American audience.

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- [Keeping Childhood Smartphone Free - Surviving Digital - Momentum](#)  
“Principals tell me that online bullying using smartphones happens outside school hours. They can’t control it. It happens outside of school. Children can be exposed to violence and sexual content that no parent would want them to see via their smartphone.”
- [What evidence exists to support restricting smartphone use for minors under 16? - Verificat](#)  
‘The potential risks associated with these platforms – such as worse mental health, high-risk behaviours in real life, sexting or cyberbullying, among others – are greater if children begin using a smartphone between 10 and 14 years of age in comparison to 18’
- [‘A smartphone could cause more problems than it solves.’](#)  
‘There are good reasons to give your child a phone. It’s a convenient way for them to keep in touch, especially in an emergency. You can also use the phone to keep tabs on your child’s whereabouts (although every parent should consider carefully the ethical implications of this), and the educational apps and uses for smartphones shouldn’t be dismissed.’  
‘These advantages must be balanced with the negatives: the potential for your child’s privacy to be invaded by someone outside the family, due to fact that it is easy to track the whereabouts of a smartphone user; the risk of cyberbullying; the reality that your child never truly switches off; and the possibility of addiction to the device. In other words, a smartphone could cause more problems than it solves.’

## [Mobile phones have not disappeared from French school despite ban](#)

- Other countries are ahead of the U.S. on phone policy. [France banned the use](#) of mobile phones [on school grounds through grade nine](#) in 2018 (though the law allows students to keep their phones in their bags or pockets, so students [still use their phones](#) stealthily). In New South Wales, Australia, the use of mobile phones has been [banned in elementary schools and will soon be banned in high schools](#), although schools can decide [how to implement the bans](#).

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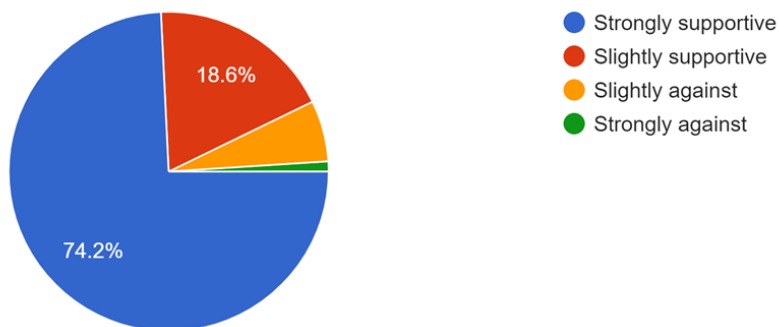
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## Appendix F – Results of Smartphone Survey of HTETNS Parents

Regarding the idea of a collective voluntary agreement to defer buying our children a smartphone until a defined age I would be:

97 responses

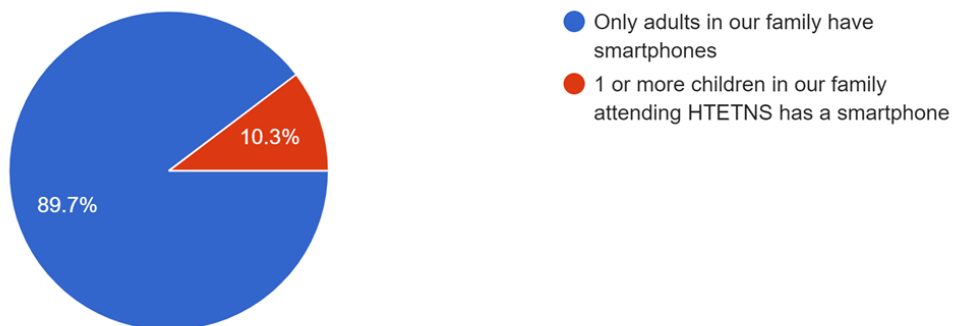


6 February 2024

2

Regarding ownership of smartphones, currently

97 responses



6 February 2024

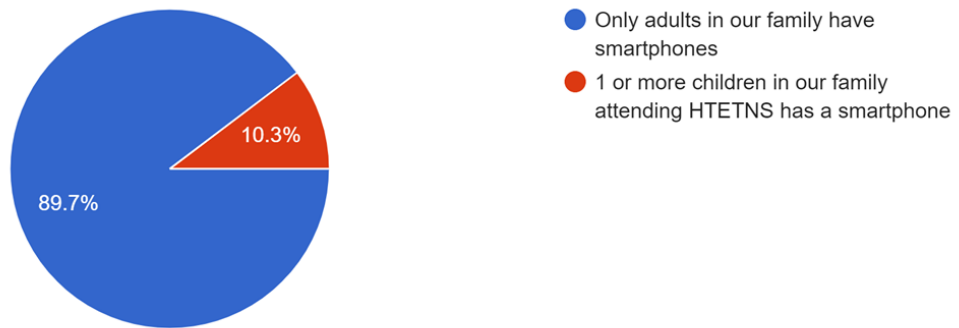
3

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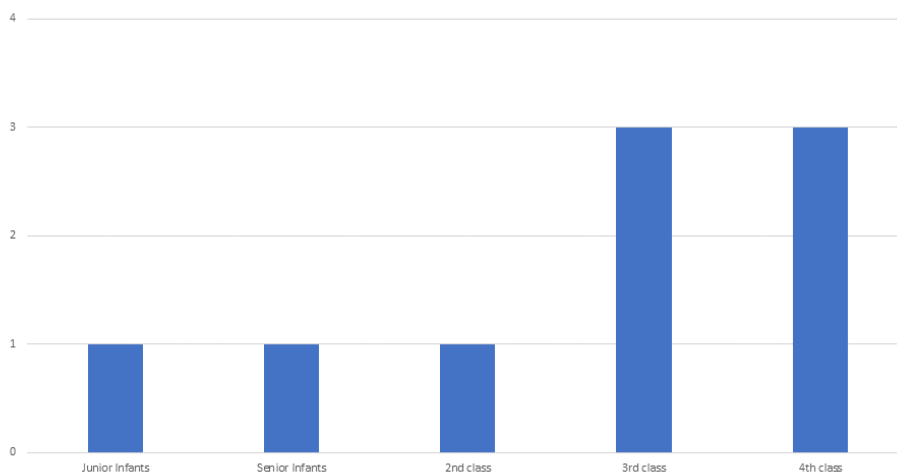
Regarding ownership of smartphones, currently  
97 responses



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Class distribution of respondents answering “1 or more children in our family attending HTETNS has a smartphone”



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5

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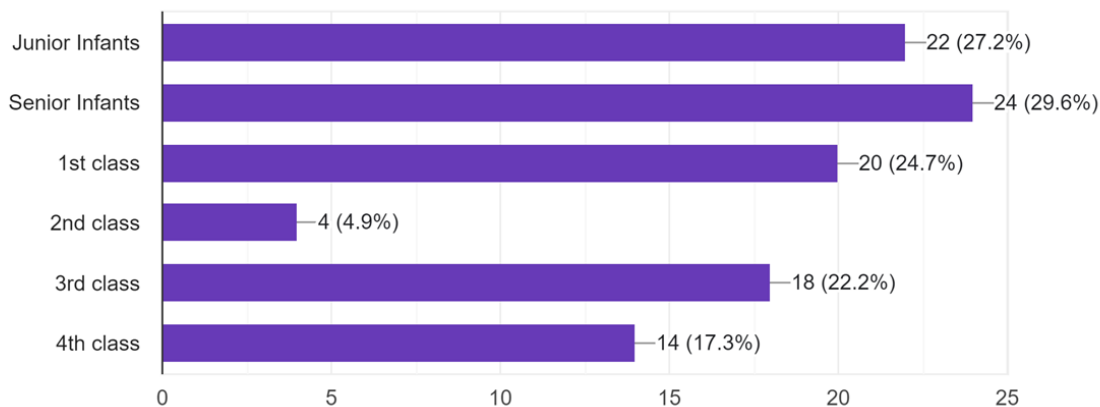
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Note: 2<sup>nd</sup> class is much smaller than others (c. 10 children, also currently no 2<sup>nd</sup> class rep in the Smartphone Community)

My child/children are in (tick as many as apply):

81 responses



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## Comments, Grouped by Class of Respondent (1 of 4)

| Comment  |
|--|
| <b>Junior Infants</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully support this</li> <li>Great idea, thanks for the initiative</li> <li>This is a great idea! Well done</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Senior Infants</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I do think the schools policy and approach on homework needs to support/tie in with any decision parents take collectively re smartphone ownership for our childreb. I strongly disagreed with the children not having paper copies of their homework last year in junior infants and parents needing to utilise their smartphone to access the homework. This worked against the stance I was taking to be seen to 'put my phone away' and to limit my childs access to my smartphone. The current homework policy within the school states homework will be disseminated 'electronically' I believe(and in practice parents then access it via their phones mainly).This I think needs to be reviewed in light of research around children and smartphone use/access regardless of any decision we take as parents. It sends the wrong message otherwise and doesn't aid parents in their efforts to reduce their own use (lead by example) and limit their child's use.</li> <li>I would like to note that our eldest son is in another school and is in 6th class. He's the only child in his class with no phone. There have been several incidents of cyber bullying on WhatsApp groups in that group, despite frequent school intervention. I would like to avoid this scenario for HTETNS.</li> <li>I'm against my child having a smartphone as long as possible, preferably until she is in her teens.</li> <li>Strongly in favour of this policy</li> </ul> |

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## Comments, Grouped by Class of Respondent (2 of 4)

| Comment   |
|---|
| <b>1st class</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• for phonecalls, smartwatches with that options are better solution</li><li>• I think you can ban the phones in school but can't enforce this outside.</li><li>• My child often calls our phones 'his phone' - I worry about other kids being influenced by this. Consistency would really help us manage the conversation</li><li>• My daughter is using technology sometimes (my phone or tablet) but as it is "mine" it is a lot easier to control/manage. i would agree that if all kids have no phones in primary schools, she should not have her own neither. However, I can't say if this will be the same case in 3-4years time when she'll become more independent. She is already very often away, with many after school activities and might need to have her own phone at some stage for the practical reasons. But for now I am happy with an idea of no phone school.</li><li>• We do not wish to give our child a smartphone for as long as possible (at least until secondary). I think that once most other classmates have one it will be harder to enforce, so the more children without one in the meantime, the better, but he's still only in first class so that's easy at the moment. However, educating the healthy use of them at the moment I think is so important as it will be inevitable at a certain age that they will need /want one, and educating on the use of the internet (be it on the phone or tablet/iPad/computer game) is massively important, banning won't solve any problems, but education can be preventative of the inevitable use later/in secondary.</li></ul> |
| <b>2nd class</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I don't see any need for a phone for kid while we are bringing him to school and taking back home. Planning to buy one only when he will go outside on his own</li></ul>  |

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## Comments, Grouped by Class of Respondent (3 of 4)

| Comment   |
|---|
| <b>2nd class, 4th class</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The policy refers to smart watches but some smart watches do not have internet access and would be like flip phone, they are aimed at safe communication for children and have school mode, the policy should state smart watches with school mode options are allowed if school mode is on during school hours</li></ul> |
| <b>3rd class</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I think parents should focus on encouraging children self discipline. They will be more exposed as they get older. They need to practice how they can use it sensibly.</li><li>• I would also like to see education around the safe use of smartphones and online in general to be introduced in the school.</li></ul>    |
| <b>4th class</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If children really need a phone to contact parents then I would encourage an old school Nokia non smart phone. This worked for my daughter when she was in 6th class. She got a smartphone in 1st year secondary school..... absolutely no need for a primary school age child to have a phone.</li></ul>                 |
| <b>Junior Infants, 1st class</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We don't support the idea of children having smartphones at a young age. And absolutely NO smartphone in school.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Junior Infants, 4th class</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strongly supporting the idea of not allowing smartphones and smartwatches, etc in school.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Senior Infants, 3rd class</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thank you for work on this!</li></ul>   |

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# Keeping childhood smartphone free

HTETNS PGTA



## Comments, Grouped by Class of Respondent (4 of 4)

| Comment   |
|---|
| <b>Unknown</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Each family has different conditions. So, there should not be "one for all" rules in my opinion. Some kids might be walking home alone or for other reasons might need smartphones. for example, in my niece's primary school things regarding smartphones work as following: kids who need to bring a smartphone to school put it on silent and drop it into the box, locked by the teacher during the classes. Teacher gives it back to pupils when classes end, or in the mid, when kids can justify why they need it. I like this rule and think it can be applied in our school as well.</li><li>• Great initiative!</li><li>• Smart phone with kid's interface...purely for communication when kid is away. Some education app such as scratchjr,</li><li>• Whatever we can do to keep smartphones away from our children is great - I'm here to support it</li></ul> |

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## Appendix – Survey Methodology

- Survey was created by the HTETNS Smartphones Sub-Committee using Google Forms
- On 24 Jan we shared some pre-reading links:  
<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorials/2023/05/26/the-irish-times-view-on-smartphone-use-by-children/>  
<https://amp.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jun/03/much-easier-to-say-no-irish-town-unites-in-smartphone-ban-for-young-children>
- A link to the survey was circulated to parents via each of the class parents' WhatsApp groups on 30 Jan, with the following message:  
We've set up a SHORT and ANONYMOUS survey on the topic of smartphones in schools, which should only take a few minutes and includes a section for comments.  
Feedback from as many parents as possible is really important, so please take part in this survey and share your thoughts!
- The survey was closed on 6 Feb, the results were shared on 7 Feb via the parents' WhatsApp groups.

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## Appendix – Survey Questions

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Section 1 of 3

### HTETNS Parents Smartphone Survey (Anonymous)

We'd like to test the water with parents regarding a collective voluntary agreement to defer buying smartphones for our children as long as possible e.g. at least until end of 6th class (still to be agreed exactly when).

This will be separate from the school's overall smartphone policy.

Some articles that may be of interest, if you've not already seen:

- <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorials/2023/05/26/the-irish-times-view-on-smartphone-use-by-children/>
- <https://amp.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jun/03/much-easier-to-say-no-irish-town-unites-in-smartphone-ban-for-young-children>

This survey is anonymous, we will not ask you for any identifying information.

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Regarding the idea of a collective voluntary agreement to defer buying our children a smartphone until a defined age I would be: \*

- Strongly supportive
- Slightly supportive
- Slightly against
- Strongly against

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Regarding ownership of smartphones, currently \*

Only adults in our family have smartphones

1 or more children in our family attending HTETNS has a smartphone

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Section 2 of 3

Smartphone age ✕ ⋮

Description (optional)

The age at which my children received their smartphone was...

6

7

8

9

10

Prefer not to say

Other...

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Section 3 of 3

Finally... ✕ ⋮

Description (optional)

My child/children are in (tick as many as apply): \*

Junior Infants

Senior Infants

1st class

2nd class

3rd class

4th class

Please add any additional comments or suggestions (optional)

Long-answer text

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