

17 January 2025



## **Smartphone Free Childhood (SFC) - Ecclesall Group**

**Parents of 97 Ecclesall pupils have now signed the Ecclesall pact, pledging to delay giving their child(ren) a smartphone until they are older. Will you?** If you're undecided on this topic, please go to [www.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk](http://www.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk). More info on the pacts can be found near the end of this newsletter.

**Since our post in September, we're very pleased to share that there has been lots of action boosting the SFC cause:**

**Australia passed a new law banning young people from accessing social media until the age of 16.** Obviously we hope this will influence other governments - preferably ours! - to do the same. The Online Safety Act 2024 is a start and will bring about tighter controls on tech companies but unfortunately doesn't go anywhere near preventing young children from accessing social media in the first place. Our government doesn't have plans to act on this any time soon. So that means the SFC movement and the power of parents is going to remain vital for some time.

**Silverdale School has announced a future ban on smartphones on site** (not even allowed en route to/from school) for Y7s from next September. The school plans to extend this ban to other year groups up to Y11 and is currently consulting with parents on this.

**Peter Gilbert, local Councillor, met last week with members of SFC** for Ecclesall, Greystones, Dobcroft and Silverdale to discuss how he can lend his support to this movement. We are delighted at his interest and excited to see how this will raise the profile of our groups in the local community and within Sheffield City Council.

**Channel 4 recently broadcast "Swiped - The School Which Banned Smartphones"**, a two-part programme in which a group of teenagers take part in an experiment by handing over their smartphones for 21 days and they're monitored to see the effects. It's really interesting and at times very hard-hitting... well worth a watch if you didn't see it. It didn't mention some of the common effects of social media on young people (e.g. the detrimental effects on girls of feeling a pressure to focus excessively on self-image) but it gets across the main messages to parents about why we should all consider delaying giving our children smartphones.

**Smartphone Free Childhood believes that the only reason a child needs a smartphone is because everyone else has one.** If parents work together, we can change this norm. Until very recently, parents who wanted to delay giving their children smartphones have worried about causing their child to be made fun of or socially isolated. But as awareness of the concept of delay is growing, this situation is quickly changing 😊. **It's OK to delay!**

### **If your child is in Year 6**

This is the most common time that parents feel under pressure to buy their child a phone. If you're in this situation, please do take a quick look at [www.smartphonefreechildhood.com](http://www.smartphonefreechildhood.com).

**If you've already bought your child a smartphone**, please prevent them from accessing social media on it until they're much older (we recommend 16+). Unfortunately this is easier said than done. Having a no-data SIM is the only sure way to achieve this but of course it impacts massively on the functionality of the phone. But Social media is the biggest concern in relation to children and smartphones. As well as using parental control apps, we recommend limiting phone use to certain times, preferably encouraging use downstairs with adults around and definitely making sure they are not in a child's bedroom at night.

**To keep our kids safe, a basic phone is all that children need to keep in touch and stay safe** and [www.smartphonefreechildhood.com](http://www.smartphonefreechildhood.com) offers information about alternatives to smartphones if your child is starting to go out alone.

### **The Pacts**

We know that there are lots of parents supportive of this concept who haven't signed up. We'd love to see lots more of you sign it - this gives other parents confidence to do the same and that's how we're achieving change. **In the Ecclesall pact, you can opt to see who else in your child's year has already taken it.** There are 2 options to choose from:

1. Delay giving your child a smartphone until at least the age of 14 and delay access to social media to 16; or
2. Delay giving your child a smartphone for the coming year

**To access the form, please follow this link:**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfonIUHWkphHJsxHGF2UCmzR2-M3d2pcumWamT-ITSdhES0GA/viewform>.

To request the form in Microsoft Word format, please message 07941 643152.

At the end of the form, there's a link to the national pact which feeds into live data for the whole country. If you prefer just to sign the national pact, please go to [www.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk](http://www.smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk).

### **Join Us**

Next month it will be a year since SFC started. It's going from strength to strength, thanks to parents like you. Together, our impact really is changing lives and contributing to a healthier and safer future for our children.

If you want to join the Ecclesall SFC whatsapp group - to ask questions, seek support or just be part of this fantastic international movement, go to the website and click on "Find Your Local Community".

**Be part of the change 😊**

Ecclesall SFC Group



To see our previous post, please seek out the school newsletter from 20th September 2024.