



Building momentum in your school

A guide to becoming a School
Organiser – bringing families
together to sign the Parent Pact

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Introduction

“This isn’t about banning tech or turning back time – it’s about giving children more of what really matters: time, connection, and freedom to be kids”

When parents unite and agree to delay giving smartphones to their children, something powerful happens: peer pressure is reduced and a new social norm begins to take shape. This guide is a roadmap for parents who want to introduce and promote a Smartphone Free Childhood Parent Pact in their child’s primary school.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for any parent who wants to help their school community take a fresh look at smartphones, social media and childhood.

Maybe you’re ready to kick things off, or maybe you just want to support what’s already starting to grow. Either way, you’re in the right place.

We use the terms School Organiser (someone taking the lead) and Active Supporter (someone helping to build momentum) – but don’t worry about the labels. What matters is that you care, and you’re willing to help make change happen.

This guide walks you through the journey, leaning on what we’ve learnt in our first year. It shares what works, what to watch out for, and how to bring other parents with you. You don’t need to be an expert. You just need to be brave enough to start the conversation.

It’s designed to be relevant for **all types of primary schools** – whether state, independent, or faith-based – and focuses on positive, supportive steps that any parent can take.

Quickstart guide

Here's a high-level summary of the steps in this playbook – ones that have already worked for parents around the country.

1. Form a small group

Find a couple of people who share your concerns

2. Start the conversation with other parents

Start the conversation in class WhatsApp groups

3. Loop in the School

Talk to the Head Teacher

4. Run a short parent survey

Use a survey to engage parents in the conversation

5. Host a parents' meeting

Share information and experiences

6. Launch the Pact!

Ask if parents want to choose to delay

The aim is to create a sense of shared purpose and build towards a strong group of parents signing the Parent Pact together. You don't have to follow every step, or stick to a strict order – feel free to adapt things to suit your community. Over the following pages, we'll walk through each stage in more detail.

What is the Smartphone Free Childhood movement?

The **Smartphone Free Childhood movement** is a growing community of parents and carers who believe that delaying smartphone use for children leads to **happier, healthier, and safer childhoods**.

Research increasingly shows the negative effects of early smartphone access, including screen addiction, exposure to harmful content, and increased mental health challenges. By working together as a **school community**, parents can reduce peer pressure and support each other in making informed choices.

Smartphone Free Childhood is a grassroots movement that sparked to life by accident in February 2024. Two mums, Daisy Greenwell and Clare Fernyhough, created a WhatsApp group to support each other in postponing smartphone use for their children. When Daisy posted about it on Instagram, it went viral and thousands of parents joined. It was really clear that there are many, many parents who are desperate to delay giving their children smartphones but they needed a way to coordinate socially to reduce the peer pressure.

On the back of the early interest, Daisy and her husband, Joe Ryrie, gave up their day jobs and created Smartphone Free Childhood as a charitable organisation to support parents, grow the movement and coordinate the thousands of volunteers who are now driving this forward.

In its first year to February 2025 the movement experienced significant growth and impact:

- **Parent Pact:** Launched in September 2024 to encourage parents to commit to delaying smartphones from their children until at least the age of 14, and social media until 16. The pact was signed by over 130,000 parents in the first six months.

¹ For more detail on these, see the parent to parent presentation [here](#).

² Smartphone Free Childhood is run as a charitable organisation. 100% of donations go to our own charitable fund (hosted by an 'umbrella' charity called Prism the Gift Fund), so we can accept Gift Aid and ensure all money goes towards our charitable objectives. All funding so far has come from donations from individuals.

- **National coverage:** In the first six months, parents in more than 13,850 schools (over 40% of schools in the country) signed the pact, showing this is a challenge that parents are facing across the country.
- **Legislative advocacy:** The movement has influenced political discourse, contributing to the introduction of the Safer Phones Bill, which introduced the conversation to Parliament about raising the digital age of consent and implementing stricter regulations on smartphone use among children.
- **Celebrity endorsements:** Public figures such as singer Paloma Faith and actor Joe Wicks have publicly supported the campaign, bringing increased visibility to the cause.
- **International attention:** No other country has yet to mirror the grassroots success of getting parents to come together to delay smartphones. As a result, parents in many other countries are coming to Smartphone Free Childhood to look to take a similar approach. ([This article](#) in the New York Times gives a sense of this.)

Through these efforts, Smartphone Free Childhood has rapidly become **the most prominent movement for delaying children's smartphone use in the UK.**

Why become a School Organiser or an Active Supporter?

Make a difference

As a **School Organiser** or **Active Supporter**, you will:

- **Protect your own child / children** from the harms of smartphones and social media or the exclusion that they currently risk if they don't have a smartphone when they transition to secondary school.
- Help **protect the well-being of hundreds of children** by encouraging later smartphone adoption. You will be making a meaningful difference to the childhood of a significant proportion of the children in your school.
- **Make life easier for other parents and carers.** You're not just helping children — you're protecting the parent-child relationship. The pressure to give in, followed by the stress of managing screen time, can put huge strain on families. Delaying until children are older allows for calmer, more mature conversations – and a better family life through the early teenage years.
- Foster a **strong parent community** in your school that works together to tackle one of the greatest challenges we all face: how to parent in the digital age. This is a challenge we're all taking on. Coming together to engage with it can create a tighter sense of community.
- Become a deeper part of the **school community**, developing a deeper relationship with your school, the head, the teaching staff and the wider parent group.

There are many, many advantages to taking the lead in your school and we regularly hear from school organisers that it has been a truly rewarding experience.

Common concerns before starting out

It is very normal to have some fears or concerns before starting out. You're reaching out to a community, likely including many people who you don't yet know, and you don't know how it will be received. Every single person who has led the process in a school has had this feeling and then gone on to feel the joy of having dared to stand up and make a difference on the other side.

Here are the most common concerns people experience before getting started:

"I don't know enough"

You don't need to be an expert to make a difference. Your role isn't to deliver perfect answers – it's simply to open up a conversation. Sharing why you personally feel it's important to delay smartphones is more than enough to get started. And if someone asks a question you're unsure about, it's completely fine to say, *"I don't know, but I can find out."* That openness and honesty builds trust.

"I don't want to offend"

This isn't about judging anyone – it's about supporting each other as parents. We're all navigating tricky decisions, and everyone is doing their best. And we want to include everyone in the conversation.

Some of the most powerful allies in this movement are parents who have already given smartphones to their children and wish they'd waited or who are grappling with the challenge of how to manage access to sites and social networks after giving a phone.

Approaching the conversation with interest and empathy helps everyone feel included.

"I don't want to get into a fight"

You're not trying to convince everyone. You're simply looking to connect with other parents who feel the same way you do.

If just 25% of a class signs the pact, that's often enough to shift the culture and ease the pressure. This is about finding the part of your community who agrees with you, not fighting to persuade everyone.

Because you're not trying to convince everyone, it means you can have open conversations with anyone about this. Some of the most valuable conversations you'll have will be with people who don't want to sign the pact but are willing to explain their thinking to you.

“What if no one engages?”

It's very unlikely that you're the only one feeling this way. More often than not, other parents are quietly thinking the same thing, waiting for someone to speak up. The Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group gives those parents a safe and supportive space to connect. And if, for any reason, it doesn't take off straight away – you've lost nothing by trying.

In many schools, we've seen a parent start a conversation that stalls, only for the conversation to start up again and gather momentum several months later on the back of the topic getting more attention in the news.

“I don't want to have to stand up and speak in front of other parents”

- It is a fact of life that some people are more comfortable speaking in front of an audience than others. If you are not comfortable speaking, it does not stop you from being the organiser for your school. It is helpful to have someone speak at a meeting but that there are lots of other options:
- It could be another parent from your school who engages along the way (often there are parents who feel more comfortable public speaking because they do it for their work.)
- There may be a parent from a nearby school who has already led the process in their school who would be comfortable speaking.
- One of your regional leaders from Smartphone Free Childhood may be happy to speak. You can find them on the Smartphone Free Childhood Regional WhatsApp Groups.
- Or there are charities such as Papaya (Parents Against Phone Addiction in Young Adolescents) who have speakers.

In any case, don't let a nervousness about public speaking prevent you from getting the process started.

³ The social scientist Damon Centola, ran a series of experiments and found that a group of about 25% are suddenly able to build consensus around their view when even slightly smaller numbers fail. “Approaching that tipping point is slow going,” Centola said in 2018. “But once you get over it, you'll see a really large-scale impact.”

Key Principles

Before stepping through the process, it's worth highlighting a few key principles that the movement lives by. These are relevant to every stage of the process and keeping them in mind will help you to engage your communities in a positive way.

We don't judge

Parenting in the digital age is complex, and we're all doing our best with the information we have. Some families may have already given their child a smartphone, and that's okay – they're still welcome in this conversation. Our goal is to support all parents, wherever they're starting from. By creating an open, inclusive space, we're far more likely to build momentum and shift the culture together.

We're not here to sell

This isn't about persuading or pressuring anyone. It's an invitation — for parents who feel the same way to find each other and stand together. You're not selling something or pushing an agenda; you're creating space for families to support one another in choosing a smartphone-free childhood. If others don't join, that's their call. But when enough parents come together, the cycle of peer pressure breaks — and something powerful shifts.

The Parent Pact is more powerful than a school smartphone ban

There's growing momentum around banning smartphones in schools – and we support it. But the Parent Pact is about more than just school hours. When families choose to delay smartphones together, children get to enjoy a truly smartphone-free childhood, round the clock. It's a conscious, informed choice by parents – and that's more powerful than any school policy alone. Ideally, we'd have both. But if we had to choose, we'd choose the pact.

We're not asking the school to lead

This is a parent-led initiative. Schools don't need to drive it — they just need to make space for the conversation. The pact works because it comes from parents themselves. When a few parents take the first step, momentum builds — and schools often follow.

What's it like to be a primary School Organiser?

Katherine, Riverhead Riverhead Infants' School & Amherst Primary School, Kent - "I wasn't sure how to start, so I began by speaking with parents I knew, using a few stats and articles to help. I listened a lot, which helped me understand different parents' perspectives. This made others feel comfortable and keen to talk more, and eventually they joined the WhatsApp group. Taking time to build momentum one parent at a time has felt like a non-threatening and effective approach."

Dara, Law Primary School, East Lothian, Scotland - "I was terrified about putting myself out there but spoke to another mum who was well connected and she assured me she'd help spread the word if I took it on. Now we have over 200 engaged parents from local primaries. After a school survey, we ended up getting the most Parent Pact signatories in Scotland! What started with just me is now a group driving real change - including running other projects like a petition and local art installation! It's really been worth it to see parents come together on this."

Crispin, Clare House Primary School, Bromley, London - "I started out hesitantly sharing a couple of Smartphone Free Childhood posts in our class WhatsApp group, not knowing what to expect. But quickly other parents wanted to know more and started supporting too. I think we all have the same concerns, it just needs someone to make the first move. 50% of our parents have already signed the pact, so we know we've made a difference."

Gemma, Busbridge Junior School, Surrey - "I was nervous about sticking my head above the parapet and being "that parent," but after setting up a few WhatsApp groups, momentum quickly grew - and I've come to embrace the role! We got our Head on board, and our Junior school is going smartphone-free from September. It's exciting to be part of a fast-moving movement, and really rewarding when parents I barely know thank me for raising awareness."

Andy, Little Chalfont Primary School, Bucks - "I felt a little nervous to start out with but I'm so glad I did it. I'm delighted that I don't have to worry about smartphones for my children until later and I feel like I've done something really valuable in helping other families avoid the issue too. And I feel far closer to my kids' school and community in a way that I hadn't expected."

What's it like to be an Active Supporter?

Julia, Little Chalfont School, Bucks – “I had very little time but wanted to help because I think this is so important. Being an Active Supporter primarily meant being the biggest cheerleader for the movement in our class WhatsApp group, joining a couple of meetings to decide how to approach things, and supporting some of the logistics around the talk. The impact we've had for the time we've put in is incredible - it's proof that small efforts really add up.”

Hannah, Dulwich Prep and Senior School, London - “I didn't feel like I needed to have all the answers. I just knew it was an issue I felt strongly about and thought it was important to start a conversation about it with other parents, rather than everyone just worrying alone! The WhatsApp Group was a great place for everyone to share their thoughts and concerns.”

How do you get started in your school?

A tried-and-tested approach

We suggest a six-step process to help you build momentum around the Parent Pact. It's not the only way – and there's no perfect path – but this format has worked well in lots of schools across the country.

You don't have to follow every step, or stick to a strict order. Some groups skip stages or adapt things to suit their community. That's totally fine. The aim is simply to create a sense of shared purpose and build towards a strong group of parents signing up together.

Here's a quick overview of the steps – and on the next pages, we'll walk through each one in more detail.

1. Form a small group

Find a couple of people who share your concerns

2. Start the conversation with other parents

Start the conversation in class WhatsApp groups

3. Loop in the School

Talk to the Head Teacher

4. Run a short parent survey

Use a survey to engage parents in the conversation

5. Host a parents' meeting

Share information and experiences

6. Launch the Pact!

Ask if parents want to choose to delay

The action plan

Step 1: Form a small group

Find like-minded parents. The first step is to team up with others who share your concerns and goals. Finding a few kindred spirits will help to build confidence and momentum.

Reach out to one or two parents you know (or suspect) feel the same way about kids and smartphones. It could be friends or parents you've chatted with about screen time before. Share your interest in the idea of the Smartphone Free Childhood movement and the Parent Pact and see how they react.

Limit your ask: These early fellow supporters may or may not be the group that ultimately help you roll out the pact in your school.

Be aware that many parents already feel too stretched and are nervous about additional time commitments, so it's worth highlighting that you're not asking for their time. From these early supporters you're just asking for their support.

At this stage, all you're looking for is a small group to sign the pact, join the Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp Group for your school and back you up in class WhatsApp groups when you start conversations there.

Build your confidence: Finding just a few like-minded people should give you the confidence to take it to the next step of the process.

Tip: If you do start conversations and find other parents aren't immediately supportive, that can be really helpful. Understanding the "push backs", even at this early stage, will help you frame the messaging and information that you might share later.

Useful resources for step one (form a small group):

FAQs

How to talk to other parents about SFC

Step 2: Start the conversation with other parents

Once your core group is ready, it's time to **open up the conversation** to other parents and carers at school. The key here is to spread the word in a friendly, inclusive way that sparks interest without pressure.

Start the chat in everyday channels: A great place to begin is your class's parent WhatsApp group (or whatever communication channel your school's parents use). Post a **warm, non-judgmental message** to introduce the idea. For example, you might write something like:

"Hi everyone! Lately I've been thinking about when to give our kids smartphones. I learned about a Smartphone Free Childhood Pact idea that brings parents together to delay smartphones, so that nobody feels left out. I'm considering this for my child and wonder if anyone else would be interested in chatting about it? No pressure at all – just curious if others have similar thoughts!"

This kind of message is friendly and invites discussion, rather than demanding a commitment upfront.

Reach out through parent reps or the PTA: If your school has class parent representatives, a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), or a parent forum, get them on board. Let them know a group of you are joining the Smartphone Free Childhood movement and ask if they can help **spread the message**. For instance, you could suggest bringing it up at the next parent meeting or in a school newsletter. Having the support of class reps or PTA members can lend credibility and reach more parents in each year group.

Create a dedicated WhatsApp group for your school. You can do this in the Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp Community for your region (which you can find [here](#)). Once a few parents show interest, invite them to your school's dedicated Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group just for those curious or supportive of the Smartphone Free Childhood idea. This gives people a space to chat, ask questions, and feel part of something without the noise of the main class group. Keep it friendly, informal, and welcoming – it's a space for encouragement, not pressure.

Just because you've set up this group doesn't mean you should stop using the class WhatsApp chats. This space is for deeper conversations with the most engaged parents — but the class groups are still essential when you need to reach everyone.

Start small and give it time. Think of this stage as warming people up. You're opening the door to a conversation, not expecting instant decisions on whether to sign the Parent Pact. Some parents may be ready to sign up to the pact right away, while others might need more time to reflect. That's OK. Creating a positive, pressure-free space allows people to engage in their own time – and that's often what leads to lasting change.

Reach out to your Regional Leaders for support. In most regions in the country, there are volunteer parents who are helping to co-ordinate efforts across a whole region. Reach out to your regional leaders through your regional WhatsApp Community (they're usually the community admins!). They can support you and may be able to help if you face any unexpected challenges along the way.

Throughout all these interactions, keep the tone **positive, supportive and non-judgemental**. Frame the pact as an empowering choice by parents, **working together** to keep childhood simpler and healthier for our kids.

Tip: Share helpful stories and information. Use the WhatsApp groups to share useful articles, short videos, or personal stories about why delaying smartphones can make such a difference. Parents often find it reassuring to hear from others – especially when it's honest and relatable. Sharing your own reasons and experiences can go a long way in building trust and momentum.

Useful resources for step two (engaging the parent community):

[FAQs](#)[Example WhatsApp messages](#)[How to set up a WhatsApp Group](#)[Papaya 12 Minute Video](#)

Step 3: Loop in the school

Engaging your school's leadership team (the headteacher, key senior teachers and/or the pastoral team) is important for building support. While the Parent Pact is a **parent-led initiative**, having the school's understanding or even backing can make a big difference.

Start with a simple conversation. If you can, start informally. A friendly chat at the school gates, or during a school event, is often the best way to open the conversation with a teacher or head. You're not trying to persuade or pressure – just get a sense of how they feel and share some of the positive responses you've had from other parents so far. These early conversations can help build understanding and trust.

Follow up and offer clarity. After an initial chat, follow up with a more detailed email to explain the idea more clearly. You can see examples in the 'Useful resources' box at the end of this section. If it feels appropriate, you can request a short meeting and bring along the smartphone free childhood Parent-to-Primary Head Presentation to guide the conversation.

Make it clear that this is a parent-led initiative. You're not asking the school to lead it or take on extra work – just to support parents in having the conversation. Some headteachers may feel cautious about being seen to overstep or committing time and resources. Reassuring them that this is being driven by parents, with no expectation of school leadership, can help ease any concerns and make them more open to offering up the space for parents to have the conversation.

Be clear about the asks. You don't need formal endorsement from the head – just a willingness to let the conversation unfold among parents. The first steps might include:

- Allowing a parent survey to be shared via school newsletters.
- Giving permission for a parent-led event to be hosted in the school hall.
- Including occasional updates or messages from the parent group in school communications.

It's also worth speaking with members of the pastoral or safeguarding team, if

your school has them. They're often closely attuned to issues around phones and wellbeing, and can be great allies.

Tip: When speaking informally with the head teacher initially, you can ask whether they've heard of the Smartphone Free Childhood movement. You can ask if they've seen recent news stories or relevant TV documentaries (such as *Swiped* on Channel4) or dramas (such as *Adolescence* on Netflix). Many head teachers also have children and so you can ask about their own experiences. Understanding how they feel about the subject can be really helpful, before you share how you feel about it.

When the head teacher feels like a blocker

Sometimes a head teacher might be hesitant or hard to engage at first. That's okay – and it's more common than you might think.

There are lots of reasons why a Head might seem like a blocker. They may be:

- Worried they're being lobbied into something that could cause tension among parents
- Concerned about being seen to overstep into family decisions
- Feeling self-conscious if their own children already have smartphones

These are all valid concerns – and we've heard them before. The good news? There are thoughtful, respectful ways to respond.

If you do get a conversation with the head

If you manage to open up a conversation, here's how to gently address some of the common concerns:

1. “What if this creates conflict between parents?”

We’re not here to judge anyone – and this isn’t about telling other families what to do. We simply want to create space for parents who don’t want to give their child a smartphone yet. Many feel alone – and pressured. The Parent Pact helps them connect with others and feel confident in holding off, without their child being the only one. It’s about increasing choice, not limiting it.

2. “Isn’t this overstepping into family life?”

We’re not asking the school to make a decision for families. We’re just asking for permission to open up a parent-to-parent conversation. Parents are already talking about this – we’re just trying to give them a structured, positive way to do it.

3. “My secondary school children have smartphones – was that a mistake?”

Until recently, giving your child a smartphone at 11 felt like the only option. This movement exists precisely because the norm has felt so hard to resist. Most of us would have done the same in a different year. No one’s judging – we’re just trying to change what’s considered “normal” for the next wave of parents coming through.

If you can’t get the head engaged (yet)

Don’t worry – there are still ways to move things forward:

→ Share the SFC School Network

This is a space just for teachers and school leaders – with resources, ideas, and support from peers. It might feel safer for them to engage here first.

→ Ask for help from your Hub or Regional Leader

A quick message from them – or a gentle offer of a meeting – can sometimes open doors that feel harder for a parent to push.

→ Go bigger than the school

Consider running a community-wide event for parents across the area. Heads often feel more confident joining in when they see momentum building locally. Some prefer to follow rather than lead – and that’s fine.

Useful resources for stage three (engaging the school):[FAQs](#)[Template letter to head](#)[Parent > Head Presentation](#)

Step 4: Run a small survey

Running a survey before asking people to sign up to the pact might feel like it's slowing things down, but many parents have found it a great way to warm a parent group up. It drives the conversation in a very non-confrontational way and creates data that helps to build parent confidence that others will also sign the pact.

Create the survey. There is a standard **Smartphone Free Childhood survey template** to gather data on parents' views. This is a Google Survey and so is easy to replicate and to share via links. If you're not comfortable with Google Surveys feel free to ask for help in the school or regional WhatsApp groups. There will be plenty of people willing to help.

Share the survey via the school newsletter and via all class WhatsApp groups (not just the Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group). This is a subject that parents are passionate about and so aim for at least **50% of parents to respond**. Make it clear to parents that you'll be able to tell them how other parents in THEIR class are planning on managing smartphones and social media. This is information that most parents want. e.g.

"You might have seen in the school newsletter that a few of us parents have started a conversation with the school to discuss how to best approach helping our kids navigate smartphones and social media.

We're asking all parents to answer this anonymous 5 minute survey here: [\[link\]](#)

The aim is to help us all understand how other parents of kids in our school and in each class are thinking about it. All views are welcome – it would be really helpful to everyone else in the class if you could complete it.

The results will be shared with everyone. If you've got any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Thanks a lot."

Tip: Even though it's just a survey, this can feel like a sensitive topic – especially in classes where many children already have smartphones or have been promised one. Reassure parents that the survey is anonymous and judgment-free. That tone makes a real difference.

Give a reasonable time frame and a reminder: Keep the survey open for about a week or so (7–10 days is usually enough time for busy parents to get around to it). Announce the deadline and send a couple of reminders over the course of the week.

Here is an example of a reminder WhatsApp message:

“If you haven’t had a chance yet, please do fill in the smartphone and social media survey by Friday. If you want to understand how other parents in our class are feeling about when to give their kids smartphones and social media, we need as many parents/carers as possible to complete this survey. Thank you.”

Reminders can significantly boost response rates. Aim to get as many parents responding as you can – there’s no magic number, but a response rate over 50% of the families is a great target. The higher the participation, the more confident you can be that the results reflect the community.

Tip: Be aware that if you only use the newsletter to announce it, you will probably only get a 10–20% response rate. You will likely have to use the WhatsApp groups or the equivalent in your school and to remind people multiple times in order to get the response rate up. Once you get the response rate high, it builds interest in this subject and really starts the conversation across the school. Once one class has a high response rate, use that information to encourage other classes to increase their completion rate.

Analyze and share the results: Once the survey closes, take a look at the data. If you’ve used the Google Forms template, you can see the results as charts automatically and so you don’t need to be an Excel guru to do this.

Start by identifying the key findings. This might be, “How many families are open to delaying smartphones? How many are unsure or against the idea?” You might find, for example, that “60% of respondents are willing to consider a pact, 30% are undecided, 10% say no.” This kind of result actually indicates a majority that is open or could be persuaded.

It’s worth sharing the results with the parents in the same channels that you’ve asked people to complete the survey. Some parents will just want the headlines, whereas some will want the full results. And most will be interested in specifically what the parents in their classes look like. One of the easiest ways of doing this is by adding screenshots from the Google forms into a presentation and sharing the presentation as a link in WhatsApp.

A summary of the headlines might read something like this:

*“Survey results: 70% of responding families at our school have **not** currently given their primary-aged children smartphones. 40% said they would support a smartphone-free pact till the age of 14, and another 45% want to learn more. Only 15% were not interested. This tells us there’s broad support amongst a significant proportion of the parent group for a Parent Pact to delay giving smartphones to kids until they’re 14 and social media to them until they’re 16.”*

When parents see that many others feel the same way, it builds momentum and social proof.

In most cases where a survey has been conducted in a school community, the results show that most parents are either supportive of the pact or up for hearing more. And that those in lower years are more supportive than those in later years.

If your results are less positive, it’s worth bearing in mind a couple of things:

- These results are usually before you’ve shared lots of information about the impact of smartphones and social media on children. People may think like this because they’ve not been exposed to a lot of the facts that often lead people to change their minds.
- It may be that parents in older years have already given or promised phones and so the pact feels like it puts them in a difficult situation and they may feel judged. If this is the case, focus on the results of the lower years if there is more support there.
- Remember that you only need 25% of parents to engage in order to significantly reduce the peer pressure. So, even if most parents aren’t interested, if you can engage 1 in 4 parents, you’ll make a big difference!

Useful resources for stage four (conducting the survey):

SFC survey template

Little Chalfont Primary survey template (tweaked slightly)

Example results

Step 5: Organise a parents' meeting

Host a **school meeting for parents** to talk about the subject. There are lots of ways you can approach this.

How can you use the meeting?

- **Share the survey results** and facilitate an open conversation on the back of it.
- Present the **Smartphone Free Childhood parent-to-parent presentation** template to introduce the topic and frame a conversation
- **Request an external speaker** (either another parent in your region or an expert speaker from a charity such as Papaya).
- Have **parents who are dealing with the challenges** share their experiences
- Hold an **open conversation** where parents share their experiences, thoughts and concerns, and help each other to answer them.
- •Have **older teenagers** who have experienced challenges with social media talk

All of these are valid and a mix may be the best. We'd recommend the meeting being **60-90 minutes** depending on the content you want to cover. Remember that if the meeting is hybrid, a 90 mins can feel a lot longer than if you're in the room.

Tip: It is likely that the most valuable content will be contributions from existing parents (particularly those with older children who already have smartphones) in an open conversation so try to make some time for this.

In person, online or hybrid?

There is no right answer to this but we would recommend in person over online only. It results in a better conversation and more engagement in person.

If you have the technology, it is a great idea to make it hybrid (or record it and share it afterwards). It is a reality of parenthood, that many parents will not be able to join because they have to be at home with their children. We've seen that hybrid events can increase the number of parents who see the talk by up to five times.

Tip: Be aware that if you make it hybrid, you will suppress the turnout in person as people will opt for the easier option. One option to manage this is to try promoting the in-person meeting first and making the online option available later.

And it's helpful to share the video of the event afterwards to increase engagement but we wouldn't recommend publicising the fact that you're going to do this as it will decrease the number of parents who join in person or online for the session.

How many people do I need?

Less than you think. Even if turnout is low, it will start a conversation, particularly if you can share a video of it afterwards. And if you do share the video afterwards, try to do it as soon after the talk as possible. Parents will be talking about it with each other at the school gates and so you want those that missed it to be able to watch it back whilst it's top of mind.

Useful resources for stage five (arranging a parent talk):

Parent to parent presentation

Example: Little Chalfont Primary

Step 6: Promote the Parent Pact

The Parent Pact is available here:

<https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/parent-pact>

We've made signing up as easy as possible. It only takes two minutes. And so your challenge is creating awareness and driving engagement.

Spread the word in each class: Point people to the Parent Pact through the same channels you used before. A good strategy is to signpost the pact in each year group's WhatsApp or email list whilst sharing the material from the meeting. For example, post a message like:

"Thanks to everyone who joined the session this evening on Smartphones and Social Media. It was a great session with some really powerful reflections from parents whose older kids already have smartphones. A huge thank you to everyone for sharing so candidly."

If you weren't able to make it, you can watch it back here: [Link]

And if you'd like to see the slides that were presented, you can find them here: [Link]

And if you'd like to sign up to Parent Pact or learn more about Smartphone Free Childhood, you can do that here: <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/parent-pact>"

Make sure the message is upbeat and highlights the "togetherness" aspect. You want parents to feel that by signing, they're joining a positive community effort. If the school is supportive, you might also have the pact link sent out via an official school communication, which can catch any parents who aren't active on WhatsApp.

Celebrate the sign-ups and be supportive: As parents sign the pact, welcome them! You won't be able to see who they are individually but on the pact results page, you'll be able to see the numbers going up. Send out a general thank-you in group chats:

"Thank you to everyone who has signed the pact! It's comforting to know our kids will have a bunch of friends in the same boat without smartphones."

People feel good being part of something positive, so reinforce that feeling.

Create a ripple effect: In your announcement, it can help to mention if a number of parents are already on board in a given class. For example,

"Already 15 families have decided to do this in our class – add your name if you'd like to join!"

People are more likely to sign when they see others are doing it too. If you have class reps or well-respected parents who have signed, they might post their own encouragement:

“I’ve signed the pact because I think it’ll be great for the kids. I hope others will join me!”

This kind of peer influence is exactly how we change social norms. Even reaching a **critical mass of about 7-8 kids per class (around 25% of the class)** taking part can create a tipping point where it feels normal to not have a smartphone in primary school.

Make it competitive between classes. Sharing the league table by class is very helpful (you can get this here <https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/parent-pact-results>). And similar to the survey, using it to show that some classes are more engaged than others can help to counter inertia in those that are engaging least with it.

Tip: Generally you will get the highest response rate where parents start a conversation in the class WhatsApp group about it. Where there are two Active Supporters in a year group, encourage them to coordinate their messages to a class to try to kick the conversation off.

Tailor the message by class. Be aware that the reasons that people aren’t signing up immediately will vary by year group. In reception, the most likely hurdle is that smartphones and social media feel too far off to care now. In year 6, it is likely because most of the children already have phones. It is worth tailoring messaging for different year groups and not sending the same messages to all.

Don’t be afraid to chase. You will likely have to use the WhatsApp groups and to remind people multiple times in order to get the response rate up.

Tip: Push it hard whilst you’ve got the momentum. If you’ve run a successful meeting and people are talking about it, don’t be afraid to “go big” whilst the conversation is a hot topic. This can mean that it might feel like you’re spamming the WhatsApp groups for a week or two but that is better than trying to slowly build the pact sign-ups over time. Just try to make sure your messages aren’t all the same but that you’re sharing updates on progress and new information with each message.

Connect the participating parents. Encourage parents who have signed the pact to join the school Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group. This allows parents in the pact to know who each other are, share experiences, and offer tips (“What do we do about our child asking for a phone? How do we handle so-and-so app?” etc.). Knowing who else is in the pact is reassuring – it shows your child isn’t the “only one,” and parents can coordinate on alternative ways for kids to communicate or socialize without phones (like encouraging face-to-face playdates, etc.).

Keep the school in the loop: Let the headteacher know how many families have signed the pact (and how the school is climbing in your region’s league table). This is great feedback for them – it demonstrates parent engagement and commitment. Encourage them to share progress in the school newsletter. You will likely see your school’s support for the Smartphone Free Childhood movement grow as they see that a significant proportion of parents at the school are behind it.

Tip: Be tactical on your timing of messages. Remember that we’re all busy parents and many of us feel like we’re drowning in WhatsApp messages. Try to send messages on weekday evenings after young kids have gone to bed. This is when parents are most likely to have the time to engage.

Many parents who might be interested will just not get the WhatsApp message at the right time and will forget about it. This is one of the reasons that the reminders are so critical.

Useful resources for stage 6: Promote the Pact

[SFC website](#)

[Examples of different messaging by year group](#)

What does success look like?

Success will look different in every school, but there are some powerful milestones that show real momentum is building.

One of the key early markers is **reaching around 25% of families** in Reception to Year 5. That's often the tipping point — the moment when parents start to realise they're not alone, and that change really is possible.

Another significant milestone is **hitting 50% of families signing the pact** in the year groups where smartphone pressure tends to be highest. For many schools, that's Years 3, 4 and 5 — when playground conversations start to shift and devices begin to creep in. Engagement is often strongest here, because parents are feeling the pressure most acutely and are grateful to discover there's an alternative.

You'll also know you're making progress when digital wellbeing becomes a regular conversation — not just a one-off event. Whether it's in WhatsApp groups, at the school gates, or in parent evenings, the pact starts to create a culture shift. Parents feel more confident speaking up, asking questions, and supporting each other.

And finally, as the parent movement grows, schools often begin to respond. Some may introduce or **strengthen smartphone policies**. Others might offer assemblies, include smartphone-free messaging in their newsletters, or start to actively support the pact. It doesn't all happen at once — but these are the signs that your school is moving in a positive direction.

What comes next?

Keep the momentum going

Once you've caught the bug and experienced success in driving this through, it is very likely you'll want to keep driving things forward. Here are some of the ways we would encourage you to continue to make a difference.

1. Keep building in your school community

Encourage more pact sign-ups. PTA meetings, parents' evenings, and school fairs are all great opportunities to chat with other parents and share the idea behind the pact. A simple conversation or flyer can spark someone to join. It's great to keep the conversation alive in the school and you'll see the numbers continue to edge up.

Keep the conversation alive in your school's Smartphone Free Childhood WhatsApp group. This group is your heartbeat — a place to share updates, encouragement, and resources. Regular posts help keep the momentum going and remind parents they're part of something bigger.

Host follow-up events. A one-off parent meeting is a great start, but regular discussions, expert talks, or informal parent meet-ups can keep the conversation alive and continue building support. Remember that we're all trying to help each other navigate parenting in the digital age and the Parent Pact is just one step along that journey.

Engage new parents as they join the school. Speak at Open Evenings and ask for a dedicated letter from the head in the welcome pack. Welcoming families with a clear message about the pact sets the tone early. Hearing it from the existing parents adds weight and helps normalise the decision to delay.

2. Encourage the school to adopt a smartphone free policy

Add a page to the school website about Smartphone Free Childhood and the Parent Pact. A permanent page gives curious parents a place to learn more and shows that the school supports the movement. It's also helpful for prospective families. Encourage your school to sign up to the [SFC Schools Network](#), our supportive community for teachers and school leaders working together to create change.

Ask for the school to update its policy and declare itself smartphone-free. Once there is significant support from parents for the pact, head teachers are often willing to update their policies so that no children are allowed to bring in smartphones. This not only stops them from being used in school grounds but also at the school gates. It usually makes sense to announce the policy starting from the next term or academic year in order to give parents time to make changes if they need to. This is when the school can declare itself a Smartphone Free School.

3. Grow the movement beyond your school

Share your success in local media and community newsletters. Getting featured in a local paper or community newsletter spreads the message further and shows that change is possible — and already happening. This isn't about you showing off your success (although you deserve to!) it's about raising awareness and recruiting other parents to do the same in their school.

Encourage other primary schools. One primary school in an area is not enough to change the dynamic when children go to secondary school and so we all need to get other schools in our area to engage too.

If your school is in a trust or chain then you can ask the head teacher for introductions. Otherwise it will likely come down to connections and friendships between parents across different schools. The primary goal here is to find other people willing to lead this process in their school. Share this Guide as a way to help people understand what is involved.

Reach out to local secondary schools. We need secondary schools to adopt smartphone-free policies too — it ensures continuity and gives families the confidence to stick with the pact after primary school. School leaders understanding that this is a hot topic for future intakes will make them more likely to update their policies towards smartphones and social media.

Get involved with your local area. There's a growing network of parents like you who, after connecting with their schools, are eager to do more and help drive change in their area. This could be right around the corner – the primary and secondary schools near you, which we call a 'hub' – or a wider region, usually at the city, borough, or county level.

If you want to be part of the movement and help make a difference locally, reach out to your regional leaders through your regional WhatsApp community (they're usually the community admins!)

Our ask of you

Once you've been successful, we have one important favour to ask of you.

We ask everyone who has been successful in their school to **spread the word and help us to find more School Organisers**. This is what will help the Smartphone Free Childhood movement to grow. If you've driven the change in your school, you are the movement's greatest advocates and no one is better placed to share the joys of being an organiser and answer the concerns that people may have.

If every school organiser introduces other school organisers, then the movement will develop its own momentum and very quickly a smartphone free childhood will become the norm rather than the exception. Please help us make that happen as fast as we can!

How to overcome potential hurdles

Potential hurdle	Way to overcome it
Lack of other active supporters	You don't need a crowd to get going. Many parents find supporters simply by sending that first WhatsApp message or asking about interest via a quick survey. Start the spark – others will join as momentum builds.
Some parents sharing pro-smartphone views early	Early pushback can be useful – it gets the conversation going. You don't need to argue. Simply share your reasons and look for like-minded parents. We're not trying to convince everyone, just find the ones who feel the same. The Parent-to-Parent presentation has great talking points if you want to respond with facts.
Survey results that don't tell the story you want	Most surveys happen before parents have seen the research. Once they hear more, views often shift. Remember: you only need 25% of parents to reduce peer pressure. One in four is enough to change the culture.
Discovering your headteacher is resistant	Keep it simple. This is a parent-led initiative. You're just asking for space to talk to other parents. Make it clear you're not asking the school to take a stance – just to let the conversation happen.
Pushback from parents who rely on smartphones for communication or tracking	There are plenty of great non-smartphone options for primary-aged children. The Smartphone Free Childhood website has a solid list of alternatives to share.
Pushback from parents who have already given smartphones to their kids	This isn't about judgement – it's about support. Make it clear we're all doing our best in a tricky digital world. Involving parents with older kids in conversations can be powerful – they know first-hand how tough it can be.

How others have done it

Case study: how Little Chalfont Primary went smartphone free

Starting small

It began with a single WhatsApp message in a Year 3 class group. One parent shared their concerns about the pressure to get smartphones before secondary school. About 20 parents expressed interest in continuing the conversation in a separate WhatsApp group. That early momentum gave them the confidence to take the next step.

Bringing the school on board

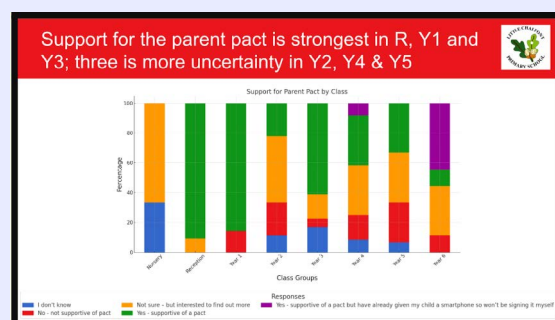
The parent approached the headteacher at the school gates. He understood the issue well — both as a head and as a parent of secondary-aged children. The school already had a sensible phone policy: no phones out on site, and pupils handing them in at the start of the day. But most children still got smartphones in Year 5 or 6.

A more detailed follow-up email outlined the idea behind the pact and asked for support with a parent survey and a speaker event. The head was receptive — and agreed to include the survey in the newsletter.

The power of the survey

The timing was tight. The survey went out just a week before the Christmas break, but the deadline helped focus attention. Unusually, it launched before there was a full group of supporters in place — but one of the survey questions asked parents if they'd be willing to help. Enough said yes to ensure there was at least one Active Supporter in every class.

Initially, after just including it in the school newsletter, response rates were low at about 15%. But once the supporters started sharing the survey in WhatsApp groups, things shifted fast. By the end of term, 70% of parents had responded. 50% said they were supportive of the idea of the pact. A further 27% were open to hearing more.



Building a moment

After Christmas, the team organised a parent talk. In the run-up, they shared class-specific survey highlights in each WhatsApp group — showing parents exactly how their own year group had responded.

The talk itself was hybrid: 15 parents joined in the school hall, 30 online. Some of the organisers worried the numbers were too low, but they decided to go ahead — and it paid off. One parent presented the SFC Parent-to-Parent Presentation and survey insights. That was followed by a powerful, facilitated open discussion. The most striking voices were parents of older children, sharing how much they regretted giving in early. The most powerful comment of the evening was:



“You think the battle ends when you give them a phone — but it doesn’t. Every three months there is something new that they want access to. It just becomes a rolling fight: WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok. I so wish I hadn’t given them a smartphone in the first place. I really wish this pact had existed a few years ago.”

Promoting the Pact

The talk became a real talking point at the school gates. The team shared the slides and video widely straight after the talk, and interest grew. It was clear that lots of parents were watching the video.

The group of parents launched a two-week push, with tailored, class-specific messages sent every other evening. It felt bold — even a bit spammy — but each message had something new and relevant so that it felt like there was a reason to share it.

The results

And It worked. The school went from 15 signed Parent Pacts to 115 in under two months. That included 80% of Year 1 families and over 50% in Years 2–5. Little Chalfont Primary jumped from 18th to 1st place in the Buckinghamshire league table.

One of Active Supporters has since reflected on it, saying, “At first, I didn’t know how much difference we could make, but once people realised they weren’t alone, it all started to snowball.”

Making it official

With the momentum behind them, the team kept going. They invited Papaya to speak to KS2 pupils, created a dedicated page on the school website, and then asked the school to go further: to officially ban smartphones from September 2025. The headteacher agreed without hesitation.

Little Chalfont Primary is now a smartphone-free school.

Spreading the word

The team didn't stop there. They organised a follow-up event with Papaya for parents and teachers, inviting other local schools to hear their story. They've set their sights on engaging all nearby primary and secondary schools — recognising that real change needs to span the full journey into Year 7.

[Little Chalfont Primary Smartphone Free Childhood Page →](#)

Case Study: How William Ransom Primary led the way in Hitchin

Starting with a small, focused team

At William Ransom Primary in Hitchin, a few parents began to notice the same conversation cropping up again and again: the growing pressure to give children smartphones before they were ready. Determined to create a healthier culture, they came together as a small team with a simple idea — what if we delayed smartphones until at least Year 9, together?

There were just four or five of them to start with, but they brought a mix of skills: comms, strategy, community organising — and a shared determination to take action. It was the right combination to keep momentum going.

“The group is key. With the group, we keep each other going.” – Richard Bowdler, School Organiser

Getting school buy-in

They began with a tentative email to the headteacher. To their relief, he was open-minded and happy to explore a parent-led initiative. That first exchange led to an in-person meeting, where the group started building a plan to engage the wider parent community.



Using the survey to surface support

To understand how parents were feeling, the team launched a school-wide survey.

The results were clear: the majority of parents supported delaying smartphones, but many were concerned about social pressure and felt isolated in their views. Many wanted more information.

Armed with the data, they organised a parent talk featuring impactful videos and evidence-based insights on the harms of early smartphone use. The event was well-attended and created a sense of shared purpose among families.

“We wanted parents to know this wasn’t about judgement. It was about supporting each other and protecting childhood. The talk gave people confidence.”

Crossing the 50% line

With consistent communication and practical support, the campaign took off. William Ransom became the first school in Hitchin to reach 50% pact adoption — a major milestone that showed the idea was working.

“Once we hit 50% adoption, we started allocating 80% of our Smartphone Free Childhood effort into what we’re doing across the town. One school isn’t enough. To change the secondary school environment, we need momentum everywhere.” – Richard Bowdler, School Organiser

Keeping the conversation alive

The school’s openness made it easier to embed the message in school life. The team spoke at new parents’ evenings and worked with the PTA’s Head of Comms to ensure the campaign had a regular slot in the school newsletter. This “always-on” approach helped normalise the pact without overwhelming people.

Going town-wide

With firm foundations in place, the team looked beyond their own school. They organised a Hitchin-wide meeting and invited heads, deputies, safeguarding leads, PTA reps and interested parents from across the town. Three schools presented: one school-led, one parent-led, and one blended approach. Eighteen of the town’s 28 schools were represented.



Building a Hitchin-wide network

Following the meeting, they formed a town-wide working group — around 30 parents, some active, some observing. It’s a low-pressure space to learn, share, and get campaigns off the ground.

They also launched a Hitchin-wide parent survey to gather fresh data and build momentum across the whole community. With more schools involved, the secondary transition starts to look different — and more manageable for everyone.

What other schools can learn

William Ransom shows what's possible when a small group of committed parents work with their school — and with each other. They used storytelling, consistency, and simple, well-designed tools to create something much bigger than themselves.

“What I feel like I’m doing now is just dealing with limiting beliefs people have. For example, I often hear people say, ‘We can’t do this without support from the school.’ The answer to that is simple. ‘Of course you can! Just talk to parents and understand what they’re thinking. The biggest role we play is reminding parents that they still have a choice.’” – Richard Bowdler

The Smartphone Free Childhood group at William Ransom School show that when parent groups are trusted and supported they can reshape norms and empower entire communities to reimagine childhood in the smartphone age.

[William Ransom Smartphone Free Childhood Page →](#)

A final message from Daisy & Joe, SFC founders

If you're thinking about getting involved and leading the conversation in your school community, we just want to say: we're really glad you're here. You don't need to be an expert, or have everything figured out — just someone who's willing to take the first step. So many parents want to delay smartphones, but feel like they're the only ones. When one person speaks up, others follow. That's how this starts.

We've seen it happen in schools up and down the country. A message in a WhatsApp group. A conversation at the school gates. A few parents coming together to ask, what if we did this differently? And from there — real change. It doesn't take a huge team or loads of time. It just takes someone like you, willing to start the conversation.

This movement is growing fast. You're not alone, and you don't have to do it alone. We're here to support you — and so are hundreds of other parents doing this in their own schools. Thank you for stepping forward. You're doing something simple, brave and important — and it's making a real difference.

Thank you!

Daisy & Joe

