



Dear Parents/Carers,

One minute it was Christmas and here we are at Easter already. It has been a very fast-moving term and in that time the world has changed. We are very aware of how challenging the world feels for our young people right now. Are we at war? What will happen to global prices? What power do we have to influence or change what is happening?

Ecclesiastes (3:1) reminds us that ***“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven”*** and so we must trust that if we continue to believe that God’s word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path then it is our job to continue to be the best that we can be – whatever our faith or belief system – and live lives of compassion and love towards our fellow human beings.

Psalm 46 was written at a time of great geo-political upheaval. The psalm talks of the earth giving way, mountains falling into the sea, waters roaring, nations in uproar and kingdoms falling. This poetic language paints an almost apocalyptic vision of a people threatened with political collapse and military danger. Despite all of this, the psalmist has a very clear message:

***God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change.***

Psalm 46

Consequently we continue to educate our students with skills and knowledge in this Christian context that we might create a body of young people who will leave Balshaw’s and go into the world to reflect Christ’s love and make the world a better place borne out of human compassion, not religious or political rhetoric. In our Christian faith we can find refuge and strength.

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## **Some news highlights:**

Despite the Spring term being so short, if you follow the [news on the school website](#), you will know that we have squeezed a lot in! Since Christmas rehearsals have started in earnest for our forthcoming spectacular production of **Mary Poppins** which you don’t want to miss. We have celebrated the [National Year of Reading](#) and [World Book Day](#), not by dressing up as a witch or a wizard (!), but by actually *reading* books and sharing our favourite books and stories across the whole school.

We continue to build students' oracy skills throughout the curriculum through presentations, group discussions and formal debate. We are very proud of our public speaking teams who have competed in [the intermediate](#) and senior categories. Our senior team progressed through the regionals to compete in the [Northern Finals](#) where they were just pipped into second place.

Another highlight of this term was being able to celebrate the breaking of fast (Iftar) with our Muslim friends and families. After prayer we all enjoyed the most delicious food, chatted together and all had fun with a quiz about the Qu'ran!



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## **Learning is Key, but who remembers Period 2 on a Tuesday in February?**

GCSE results might be the currency that you leave school with at the end of Year 11, but it is the memories that you make on the journey that are the things that stay with you forever. That is why our staff regularly give up their own free time to provide trips and enrichment that create memories that will stay with them well beyond their time at school.

There are of course the big headline school trips. This term our students visited [Eurodisney](#).



As well as having lots of fun, our travellers engaged with all sorts of maths puzzles such as probability in the Maths Live session. We also had a visit over half term to Geneva where students learned about the Giant Hadron Collider at CERN.

However, there have been a number of other smaller trips from the [French Film Study trip to Manchester](#), a visit to BAE Systems and our Warhammer Club's morning of strategy and battle at the [Warhammer Shop in Preston](#).

We try to put on a range of trips and experiences for all our students alongside the many clubs that take place in school. [You can find out more about these here...](#)

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## **Charitable Giving**

As I write this newsletter we are deep in the throes of our Lenten Fundraising Week. From lucky dips to sweet sales, teddy raffles to murder-mystery competition, we hope to raise a lot of money for this year's Lenten Charities. I would like to give a massive thank you to all parents who support our fundraising activities by giving your children money to make purchases, or by supporting with sweets and prizes. The week finishes on Friday with a trainer day where for £1 on ParentPay, your child can wear their trainers to school.

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## **Parent Forum and Your Feedback**

We hold a Parents' Forum every term which all parents are invited to. It is a chance to ask questions, provide your feedback and help the senior staff at school understand ways that we can communicate with you more effectively. Please do come to these meetings to share your ideas about the school. If you have a personal and specific issue to you, please do make an appointment to speak to your child's teacher, Head of House or a senior member of staff.

This term we explored the use of mobile phones by young people and teenagers and their presence in school. Currently we operate a policy of "If it is seen/heard, it is confiscated." However, with the parents present we looked at the idea of students not having a phone physically with them at all during the school day. More about this below...

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## **Smartphone Free Childhood**

You may know that from September **ALL** schools are to ban the use of mobile phones/smart watches in schools and to have a clear policy on their use. We have operated our "If it is seen/heard, it is confiscated" policy for years now. However, we believe that we can do much more to protect your child's mental health and wellbeing by creating a further disconnect with their phone.

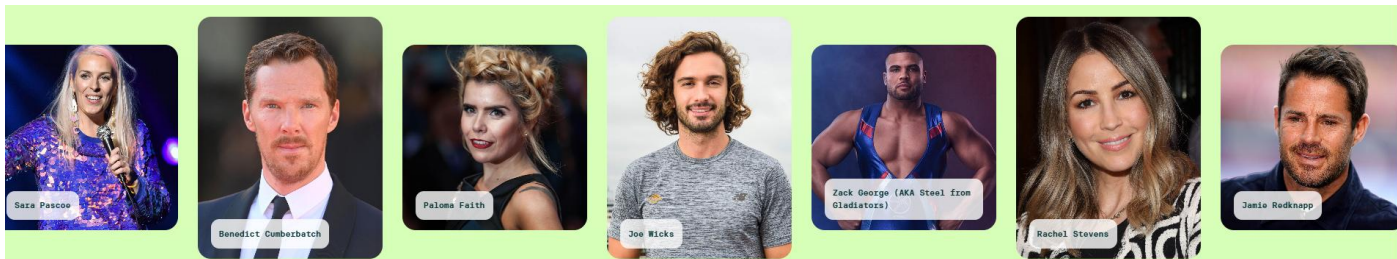
For years parents have warned about "*stranger danger*" with the idea of a suspicious, grubby-looking male in a park or alley. The reality is this: **the biggest risk to your child's safety is their use of their smartphone.**

There are schools which have taken the next step and ensured that their students have no access to phones at all during the day by collecting them in lockers, or getting them sealed into pouches which can only be opened at the end of the day.

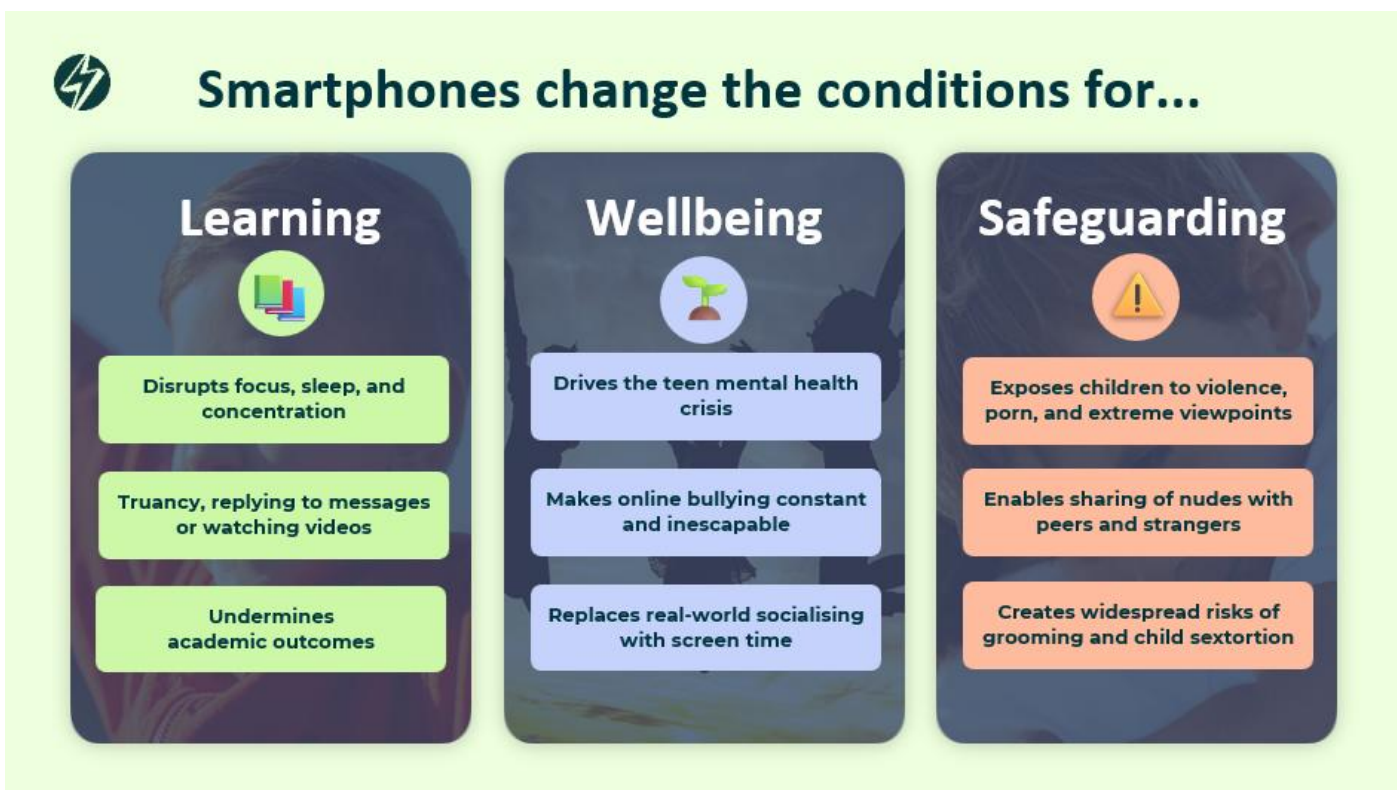
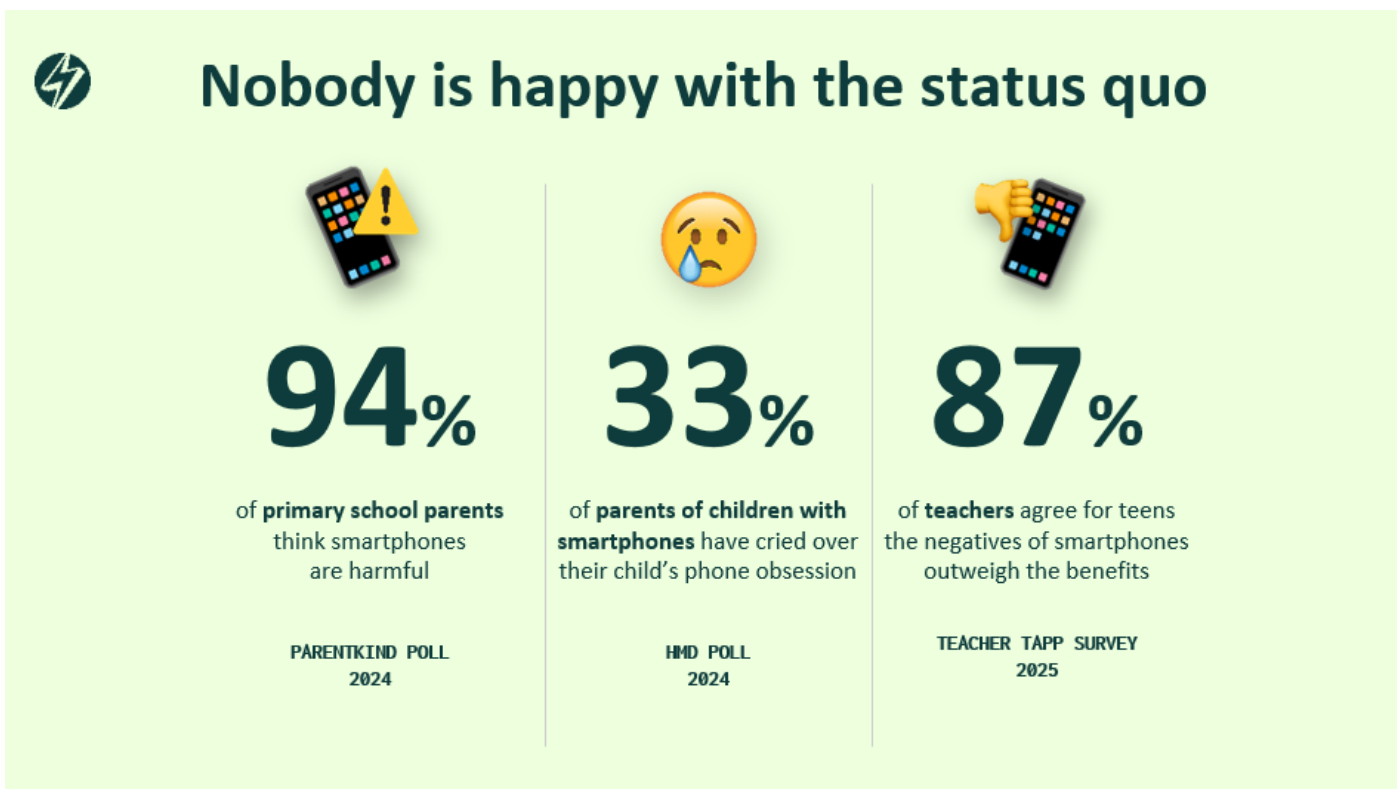
### **Why is taking my child's phone away from them more effective than keeping it in their bag?**

The reality is that students don't turn their phones off. Phones are designed to be addictive – think of your own 'relationship' with your phone as a parent! Is this the level of dependence that you want for your child? They can hear them vibrate in their bags, they have FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), they can use them in the toilets or sneakily look in their bags. Consequently there is a drop in focus, a constant psychological distraction and this has an impact upon your child's wellbeing and emotional health that we are only just starting to understand.

A grass-roots led movement by parents has been gaining momentum in recent months called [Smartphone Free Childhood](#). Already in Lancashire at the time of writing 2268 parents have signed the pact to support a Smartphone Free Childhood across 367 schools in Lancashire. Experts and celebrities are getting behind this campaign...



We would like to take Balshaw's to the next step in this process. The national direction of travel on this is very clear. It is highly likely that a legally enforced age restriction will be introduced on the use of social media in the near future.



There is no doubt that smartphones are a source of much of the social and emotional problems that are seen in schools. Schools are dealing with friendship issues that are playing out on phones but don't have a real world reality in school.

Parents are shocked when they realise that their children are being marketed to by County Lines gangs on their phones through Snapchat and Instagram every day. If your child is in a Snapchat or Instagram group then it is highly likely that if they chose to, they could order cannabis. Amphetamine, ketamine, THC vapes etc. and have them delivered within 10-15 minutes on their walk to school. This is not a fear myth – we already see this in school.

The Smart Phone Free Childhood campaign has two key aims:

- to get parents to collectively agree not to get their child a Smartphone until 14
- to delay access to social media until 16

**Smartphone Free Childhood**  
est. 2024

Parents in 50% of UK schools

1000+ local organisers

Hundreds of thousands of parents

Government are listening

Famous supporters

Every UK county

44 global groups

**182,931**

**15,256**  
UK schools covered

The PARENT PACT makes acting together simple

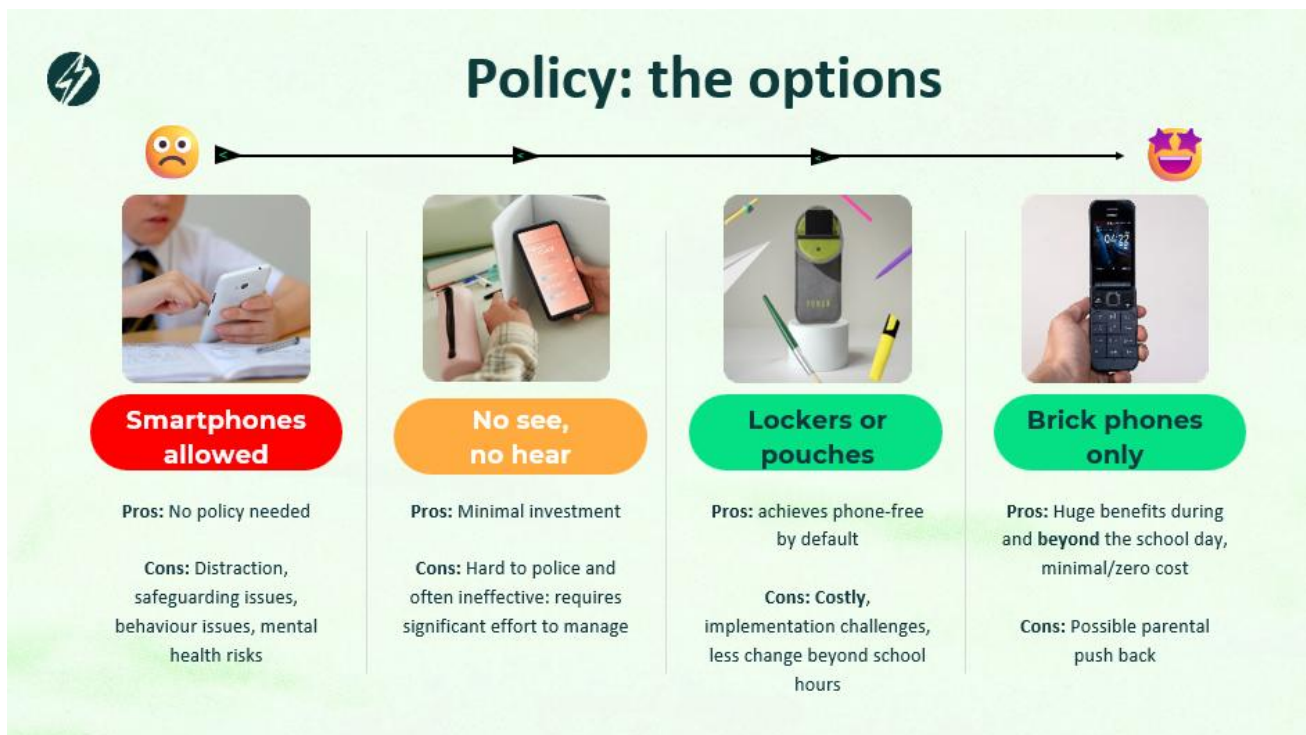
The infographic features a central map of the UK with lightning bolt icons, a list of 44 global groups, and a large graphic of a parent holding a child with the text 'SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD PARENT PACT 182,931 15,256 UK schools covered'. A circular badge at the bottom right says 'The PARENT PACT makes acting together simple'.

You can sign up to the ParentPact now by visiting the site:

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

### What is Balshaw's going to do?

We want to hear your voice as parents on this. If you look at the slide below, you know that we are already at the second stage: No see, no hear.



However, schools that have removed access to phones completely during the school day describe the impact upon students as transformative. Fewer children use the toilets, greater levels of concentration in the classroom, improved grades, students more relaxed because they **know** that their friends in school are not on their phones either.

What is your opinion? We are seeking the views of parents on the two options that we have moving forward of locking phones away or moving to “brick phones.”

[Please give us your view about the development of our phone policy here...](#)

## [Parent Voice – Your feedback and views on the school](#)

Your views are important to us. Please provide your general feedback about Balshaw’s Church of England High School here:



[Please complete our Parent Survey here...](#)

Our Christian vision and values are the foundation for all that we do at Balshaw’s and we hope that the experience that students have at this school is distinctively Christian. We would appreciate your views on how well we do this here:

[Please complete our survey about the Christian Vision and Values of Balshaw’s here...](#)

## [Staff Leaving](#)

Miss Warburton is our joint longest serving member of staff at Balshaw’s and this Easter she is retiring from her position as a Teacher of Science. In the decades that Miss Warburton has taught at Balshaw’s she has

made a difference in the lives of many students who benefitted from her close care and commitment to them, especially in her role as a form tutor.

Miss Warburton's other passion is PSHE (Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education). This subject is highly valued by students as this is the bit of the curriculum which is "real life" and is directly relevant to their experiences and the challenges that they face.

We are lucky that Miss Warburton is not fully retiring, but will stay on to ensure that our PSHE curriculum is up-to-date, cutting edge and relevant to all of our students. She will continue to secure great external speakers to talk to our students about the issues that matter in their lives.

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## **Don't forget...**

You can keep up with everything that is happening in the forthcoming week by looking at the weekly Parent Bulletin which is shared with all parents on Synergy.

Other key information can be found here:

- [Term dates](#)
  - [Year 10 mock exams and timetable](#)
  - [The whole school calendar](#)
  - [Important upcoming events on one page so you don't have to check the calendar](#)
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## **A final word**

I want to return to where we began this newsletter – rooted in God's word as our lamp and our guide. Thought the world may change and each generation deals with its own new crisis, we are still here and we continue to strive to be the best that we can be. There is one person upon whom we can always place our trust, explain our fears and to look to for hope. I leave you with the words of Isaiah as we move towards Holy Week and the most important time in the Christian calendar:

**"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock."**

Isaiah 26:3–4

