



Oughtibridge Primary School

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Thursday 15th January 2026

Mobile Phone and Tablet Messaging Use - Safeguarding and Supporting Our Children

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to remind families about the importance of carefully managing children's mobile phone and tablet use at home, particularly as children move into Years 5 and 6. While mobile phones and tablets can be useful, there are well-known and well-evidenced safeguarding risks for primary-aged children which we feel it is important to highlight.

We would like to remind parents that the minimum age requirement for WhatsApp is **13 years old**. Despite this, we know that some primary-aged children are using messaging apps designed for older users. This can expose them to content, conversations and contacts that are not appropriate for their age.

Nationally and locally, schools and safeguarding agencies have seen an increase in concerns around group chats, sleepovers and birthday parties, particularly involving Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. These include the sharing of inappropriate images, pressure to send photos, and situations where children are vulnerable to grooming. These risks are heightened when children are using phones/tablets late into the evening or unsupervised at night.

We are also increasingly aware of the **overuse of phones/tablets**, including children sending large numbers of messages or repeatedly calling others throughout the evening. This can cause anxiety, conflict and distress. In some cases, children are sending photos and messages to peers who are not invited to parties or sleepovers, which can unintentionally be unkind and upsetting.

It is important to remember that it is often easier to say or send unkind messages when you cannot see the other person's reaction. What may feel like a quick message can have a significant emotional impact on a child receiving it.

We strongly encourage parents to:

- Consider carefully whether your child really needs a smartphone/tablet at primary school age
- Visit the [Smartphone Free Childhood](#) website for advice and guidance
- Monitor your child's messages **daily** to check for appropriate content
- Set clear limits on screen time (recommended maximum of **2 hours per day**)
- Ensure phones/tablets are not used late at night

We also remind children that **mobile phones should not be taken out or used on school property**.

If a child needs to bring a phone to school for safety reasons (Y5/6 only), it must be handed in at the school office and parents should complete a mobile phone agreement.

We appreciate your support in working together to keep all children safe, happy and emotionally secure. If you have any concerns or would like advice about managing mobile phone use at home, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your continued support.

The School Leadership Team

