



March 2022

Dear parents

RE: Smart Phones - Help!

I am writing to our Upper Key Stage 2 parents with a plea!

An outcome from the pandemic has been a significant rise in the number of Avonwood children in possession of smart phones. We suspect this was to help children communicate during times when it was challenging to stay in touch with friends. Whilst they can be wonderful tools for communication, they can expose children to an adult world that they are not ready for. Recent examples of situations Avonwood children have been exposed to include:

- Viewing sexually explicit adult pornography.
- Grooming by inappropriate adults on apps like Roblox.
- Friendship issues heightened via the use of video calls and messaging (e.g. WhatsApp).

To help address this, we are working with the Dorset Safer Schools Police team to better educate children and families in steps to stay safe. Please can we ask all parents to take the three simple steps below:

Step 1 - Frequent Monitoring of Devices

We suggest parents monitor phone use daily, checking any apps downloaded are suitable and monitoring internet history. Please also check phone logs and monitor messaging. It's important children share all passcodes and passwords with you.

Step 2 - Filtering Measures with the Mobile Phone Company

Please make sure the mobile phone company has the parent filtering settings activated. This might make the phone a bit less interesting to use, but it will protect your child from accessing dangerous adult content. It is simple to do this, just pop into the mobile phone shop the sim card is linked to or ring customer services.

Step 3 - Filtering Measures with Broadband Providers

Please also make sure your home broadband filtering tool is activated. This is vital as children are skilled at swapping between the 4G and home broadband to access content.



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If you take these three simple measures, you will have already gone a long way to keeping your child safe.

If your child spends time in other households (eg stays with Grandparents or parents have joint custody), it is vital these measures are followed in their homes too. If you send your child for a sleepover and they take their device, we suggest checking the adult supervising this has these measures in place.

If you do purchase a phone as a safety measure for walking home, old fashioned non-smart phones can be purchased for less than £20 on Amazon, similar to the one below:

[Nokia 105 \(4th Edition\) 1.77 Inch UK SIM Free Feature Phone \(Single SIM\) – Black: Amazon.co.uk: Electronics & Photo](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Nokia-105-4th-Edition-1-77-Inch-UK-SIM-Free-Feature-Phone-Black/dp/B078333333)

Children are only children once; it is very much our moral responsibility to do our best to protect them from inappropriate adult content. We urge parents to have an "it could happen to us" ethos about this, as more often than not, it's children that you would never expect to find themselves in these situations where incidents occur.

Thank you in advance for your support on this important matter.

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