**SMARTPHONE VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT**

The Parents Association have introduced a voluntary agreement to not buy your child(ren) a smartphone while in primary school. This voluntary agreement was introduced to address rising concerns about the impact access to inappropriate online content and social media sites is having on children's social, emotional and educational development.

A recent [report](https://www.cybersafekids.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CSK_Data-Trends-Report-2023-V2-Web-Version.pdf) by CyberSafeKids on 5000 8-16 year olds found 25% of primary school children and 40% of children aged 12-16 had experienced cyberbullying online, 26% of children aged 8-12 experienced something upsetting online and many reported having contact with strangers. Young children are not always emotionally ready to deal with these difficult situations and this report found that almost one third of 8-12 year olds did not tell anybody about their upsetting experience.

Access to smartphones at a young age could also impact a child’s learning. A [report](https://www.esri.ie/news/research-examines-association-between-early-mobile-phone-ownership-and-childrens-academic) by the ESRI found that children who owned a phone at age 9 scored lower in standardised reading and maths tests when at age 13. This was echoed in a UNESCO [report](https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/education/2023/07/26/unesco-calls-for-global-ban-on-smartphones-in-schools/) that found high levels of digital technology negatively impacted children's educational performance as well as their emotional stability and they called for a global ban on smartphones in schools.

This voluntary agreement is available for parents who do not want to give their child access to a smartphone while in primary school. Parents can refer to the above data when discussing this agreement with their child which should help to reduce pressure that is often felt by both.

Children's online safety is a rapidly developing field and this voluntary agreement on smartphones is just one tool that we can use to address some of the challenges. For further information on how to safely navigate the online world [Webwise](https://www.webwise.ie/welcome-to-webwise/us/) is the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre and provides a broad range of excellent resources for children, young people, parents and teachers.