



A Smartphone-Free School | A short summary for parents and carers

In short: we are proposing that The Quest Academy becomes a smartphone-free school. From Year 7 to Year 11, no smartphones would be brought into school at all. We want to hear what you think before we decide anything.

What we are proposing

We are proposing a clear, simple change. Students in Years 7 to 11 would not bring a smartphone into school at all. The best and safest place for a smartphone during the school day is at home.

To be clear about what this covers: by smartphone we mean any internet-enabled mobile phone or device with a touchscreen that can access the internet and social media, run apps, and take photos and videos, such as an iPhone or an Android phone; it also **includes smartwatches** with the same functions.

This is a clear step on from our current rule, under which phones must be switched off and not seen or heard while on school premises. We believe a school day that is completely free of smartphones is better for every child.

Why we want to do this

- **Better learning.** Even a silent phone in a bag pulls on a young person's attention. Without phones, students focus more and learn more.
- **Better wellbeing.** A phone-free day gives students a real break from social media, online comparison and the pressure to be constantly available.
- **Safer break times.** It greatly reduces the potential risk of the filming or sharing of images during the school day.
- **Fairer for all.** No child is judged by the phone they own, and students who find phones hardest to put down are not left to manage that alone.

This is also the national direction

We are not acting alone. The government has made its position clear during this school year:

- Updated guidance in January 2026 says all schools should be **phone-free by default**.
- From **29 June 2026**, this guidance has the force of law, and Ofsted now checks how schools manage phones at every inspection.
- On **15 June 2026**, the government announced it will **ban social media for under-16s** (platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, Facebook and X), with the new rules expected in Spring 2027. Messaging apps such as WhatsApp are not included, so children can still stay in touch with family and friends.

Our proposal simply brings TQA in line with where the country is heading, and protects students now.

“But how will I stay in touch with my child?”

This is the question we hear most, and we take it seriously. Here is the important part: a smartphone is often the least safe way to keep a child safe. Smartphones are expensive and a common target for thieves. A child carrying one openly on the same journey each day can be made more of a target, not less. There are cheaper and safer ways to have peace of mind:

A location tracker. A small, discreet tracker can be sewn into a bag, clipped to a belt loop or added to a keyring. It lets you see where your child is, and it is not worth stealing. Examples include an Apple AirTag, Samsung Galaxy SmartTag, Tile or Chipolo, or a dedicated GPS tracker for closer to live location. Whichever you choose, please consider privacy and safety when setting it up, use a reputable product, and involve your child in how it is used.

A basic phone. If you want your child to be able to call or text on the way to and from school, a basic “brick” phone does just that, with no internet, apps or social media. It is far cheaper to buy and run, and far less attractive to thieves. A simple model such as the HMD 105 4G usually costs around £20 to £30. (Choose a 4G model, as older networks have now been switched off.) A basic phone is for the journey only: it must be switched off before your child enters school, and not be seen or heard while on school site.

A basic phone and a tracker together cost a fraction of a smartphone, keep your child contactable, and are genuinely safer. This also removes the **pressure many parents feel to buy an expensive smartphone.**

What about emergencies, medical needs and anxiety?

- **Emergencies.** You will always be able to reach your child through the school office, and we will always pass on urgent messages quickly.
- **Medical needs.** Any child who needs a device for a medical reason, such as glucose monitoring, will have an individual arrangement. The law allows for this.
- **Anxiety.** If your child relies on a phone to feel safe, we will work with you and our pastoral team on a gradual, supported approach.

What happens if a smartphone is brought in?

Any smartphone found during the school day would be confiscated and kept safely, then returned to a parent or carer rather than to the student. Repeated breaches would be treated seriously, in line with our behaviour policy. We will always be clear about the rules from the start, and we will work with you if any difficulty arises.

We want to hear from you

No decision has been made yet. This is the beginning of a conversation, and your view matters to us. We have set up a short **online form** for you to share your thoughts. You will find the link in the accompanying letter. Please take a few minutes to tell us what you think.