

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to you as Headteachers of Crewkerne and Ilminster Schools Partnership to share some important advice and support around mobile phone safety for children.

As mobile phones become increasingly common among children and young people, it's vital that we work together to ensure they are used safely and responsibly. While phones can be useful tools for communication and learning, they also present risks such as exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and excessive screen time.

In our local area, it is reported that over 80% of online safety incidents involve children being unkind to each other through mobile phone apps outside school hours. These incidents often affect relationships in school and disrupt learning.

Feedback from pupils also shows that many find it difficult to manage the responsibility of owning a mobile phone. Recently, during a mock parliament session at a local primary school, a proposal was made to ban smartphones for children under 10. After debate, the majority of Key Stage 2 pupils voted in favour.

Here are some key tips to help keep your child safe:

- **Set clear boundaries:** Agree on rules for phone use, including screen time limits and appropriate times for use (e.g. not during meals or before bed).
- **Use parental controls:** Most devices allow you to restrict access to certain apps, websites, and features. These can help prevent exposure to harmful content.
- **Talk openly:** Encourage your child to speak to you if they see or experience anything online that makes them uncomfortable.
- **Monitor usage:** Regularly check which apps your child is using and who they are communicating with. Be aware of social media platforms and messaging apps.
- **Lead by example:** Model healthy phone habits yourself to reinforce positive behaviour.
- **Know the school's policy:** Familiarise yourself with your child's school rules regarding mobile phones, especially as they transition to secondary school.

Useful websites for further advice:

- NSPCC – Online Safety: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

- Internet Matters: <https://www.internetmatters.org>

- Childnet International: <https://www.childnet.com>

- UK Safer Internet Centre: <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk>

- Common Sense Media: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org>


Additionally, please find below some useful infographics regarding the possible meanings of emojis as well as a list of apps that are helpful for parents to know about.

We understand that navigating digital safety can be challenging, and we are here to support you. If you have any concerns or would like further advice, please don't hesitate to contact your child's school.












Thank you for working with us to keep our children safe and responsible in their use of technology.

Yours sincerely,

The Headteachers of Crewkerne and Ilminster Schools Partnership



## TWENTY-FOUR APPS PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

 <b>SNAPCHAT</b> allows users to see your location and can keep photos/videos for up to 24 hours.	 <b>OMEGLE</b> is an anonymous video app that critics believe is a perfect app for unsuspecting predators.	 <b>TINDER</b> is a location-based dating app and website.
 <b>CALCULATOR%</b> is one of several secret apps that allows used to hide photos, videos, files, and history.	 <b>GRINDR</b> is a location-based dating app and website.	 <b>MEETME</b> is a location-based dating app encouraging strangers to meet in person.
 <b>PERISCOPE</b> allows users to stream audio and video content and share it with other users.	 <b>SKOUT</b> is a location-based dating app and website.	 <b>BADOO</b> is a location-based dating and social media app with the ability to send photos, videos, and messages.
 <b>HOUSEPARTY</b> is a live chatroom for texts and video. Users have reported explicit content, racial slurs, and more.	 <b>WHATSAPP</b> is a messaging app that allows users to send photos, videos, and make calls and video chats.	 <b>ASK.FM</b> is known for cyberbullying.
 <b>BLENDR</b> is a location-based dating app and website.	 <b>KIK</b> is a direct messaging app that allows anyone to contact anyone else with unlimited access.	 <b>WHISPER</b> is an anonymous social network that promotes sharing secrets with strangers.
 <b>LIVEME</b> uses geolocation while livestreaming videos allowing users to see your exact location.	 <b>BUMBLE</b> is a dating app that requires a female to make the first contact. Fake accounts are known to be created.	 <b>XBOX LIVE</b> is an online service that behaves as a social network and allows for chatting with strangers.
 <b>HOLLA</b> is a video chat app. Users have reported explicit content, racial slurs, and more.	 <b>HOT OR NOT</b> is a dating app where users to rate the profile of others and to see and chat with people in their area.	 <b>TIKTOK</b> is a social app with limited privacy controls known for cyberbullying and explicit content.
 <b>WILDCRAFT</b> is a multi-player gaming app that allows group chatting and has been linked to cyberbullying.	 <b>INSTAGRAM</b> allows users to see your location and allows private messaging.	 <b>TWITTER</b> is increasingly popular with teenagers and has been linked to cyberbullying.

**\*MONITORING APPS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PARENTS. CHECK OUT BARK, NET NANNY, SECURLY AND MORE.**

