BRACKENAGH WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL
22 Church Road
KILKEEL, Co Down
BT34 4QB

Tel (028) 417 65055 | bwps@btconnect.com

1st October 2025

Dear Parent,

Over the last few years, we have noticed that more of our pupils are using and being given mobile phones and smartphones. We recognise that the internet brings many positive benefits in learning, creativity, and connection, but are also increasingly concerned about the risks it poses to primary school-aged children.

At this young age, children should not have access to social media platforms. All of the major apps, including TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and others, set minimum age limits of at least 13. These platforms are designed by adults for adults, and can expose children to harmful content, online bullying, or pressures they are not yet mature enough to handle.

Research also shows that smartphone usage can be highly addictive, with lasting effects on brain development. It has been linked to poor mental health, depression, and low self-esteem, especially in young teenagers. We are also mindful of how screen use can affect children's concentration, sleep, and relationships. At primary school age, when children are still building the foundations of healthy habits, these challenges can be especially significant.

We are asking that parents might consider delaying the decision to give their child a smartphone until they are older. We know that for some families a phone is seen as important for safety or contact, but in most primary-aged situations this can be managed by simpler alternatives such as basic mobile phones without internet access. Every parent experiences the "pester power" of hearing that "everybody else has one," but by joining together as a community you can more easily resist that pressure until you feel your child has the maturity to cope safely with the online world.

We are certainly not telling you what to do; this is merely a suggestion based on experience, research and observation. However, we would like to help you with these difficult issues, so that we can promote safe, balanced use of technology. If we work together we can reduce the pressure on children to own a smartphone at this stage, which will help them focus on their learning, friendships, and play without the added challenges that come with online access.

If you do decide to give your child a smartphone, of course that is your right, but we recommend that parental controls are in place and that clear boundaries are set around its use. Our role as adults is to share a safeguarding responsibility for our children. Together we can give them the gift of a childhood that is free from unnecessary pressures, and prepare them to engage with technology when they are older, wiser, and more mature.

Thank you for your support in this important matter. We know this is a very difficult and sometimes challenging decision for families, but by working together we can support one another and help our children to grow up safe, healthy, happy and confident.

Kind regards,

M J Peacock
Principal