**Please edit the following text / delete as appropriate. Feel free to paste into your school letterhead / add your logo and share with parents in any way.**

Dear Parents/Carers,

**Thinking about getting your child a phone?**

Remember, when your child gets their first phone is YOUR choice. Children can sometimes apply pressure and make you feel like they are the only one in the class without a phone, but firstly, this isn’t true (!), and secondly, as their parent it is ultimately your decision. But we do know a lot of parents start to consider this when their child is preparing to transition to secondary school, so we have put together a few points to help you with making your decision:

1. **What phone?**
   * What do they need a phone for? If it is mainly for calling and texting, then perhaps a simple non-smart phone is best to start with. Remember that to use most social media (including WhatsApp) you need to be 13. So, if your child isn’t using social media, what else will they be doing?
   * Providing a smartphone has some risks to consider:
     + Smart phones are expensive and there is a risk of them being lost, broken or stolen.
     + How will you limit your child’s access to harmful/illegal/age-inappropriate content
     + Explore the parental settings on the device, before giving the phone to your child
2. **What skills?**
   * Help your child to use their phone safely and responsibly by talking about and practicing necessary skills (preferably before you give it to them).
3. **Making audio and video calls** – how to speak to someone on the phone (in app or otherwise). What to do if they get a call from an unknown number. What information to share and not share on the phone. To never get undressed when on a call.
4. **Sending messages (voice or text)** – etiquette of sending messages and the importance of representing yourself as you would when you are face to face with someone. Who to message and what to do if people you haven’t met ‘offline’ try to message you.
5. **Being part of a group chat** - explore the etiquette of group chats. Remind them that what they say in group chats should be what they would say face to face to someone, and that the rules for how they talk to people online, are the same for when they are offline. What will your child do if someone starts saying or sending things that make them feel upset or uncomfortable? What about if others are being unkind or bullying someone else, what would they do? What about if they get excluded from a chat, how will they react? These are all very common experiences for children.
6. **Using social media** – find out about age restrictions. Explore the app’s safe settings, that what we see on social media is not always an accurate representation of people or their ‘real’ lives and that children should therefore avoid making comparisons, boundaries around posting images/videos online, how to block/report people & what to do if something happens on social media that worries/upsets/frightens/makes them feel uncomfortable.
7. **Balance**.

How will you support your child to have a healthy balance between using their phone and doing other things (sports, hobbies, seeing family/friends, sleep etc.)?

* + Have you spoken to your child about this? Children will naturally struggle to self-regulate when using a device. Therefore, they will need your support with this.
  + Have you agreed [family rules](https://parentsafe.lgfl.net/digital-family-agreement) around device use? Such as device free times of the day (e.g. mealtimes and bedtimes)? Or device free spaces (e.g. in bedrooms)?
  + Are you a good role model for safe and balanced use of devices? Children learn most from observing those around them!

If you need any support, have a look at [parentsafe.lgfl.net](https://parentsafe.lgfl.net) (includes parental settings for devices, social media and broadband).

**[ You may want to add information and a link to any policies or school web links to signpost parents too, and remind parents who they can talk to in school for support**

**Also, consider including** [**this flyer**](https://drive.google.com/uc?export=download&id=1-E_5IiDOfw3EQBPQgbGe9f2Qy3T7o_ny) **about safety when moving to secondary school ]**

With thanks for your continued support.