COLLIS PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Exciting Updates: New School Meals & Smartphone Policy from September

Dear Parents and Carers,

Exciting News – New School Meal Provider from September 2025
I am pleased to share some exciting news about the future of our school meal provision at Collis. Following a comprehensive and competitive tender process, which attracted strong interest from over a dozen catering companies, we are delighted to announce that Nourish Contract Catering has been selected as our new school meal provider from September 2025.

Why Nourish?
Nourish is a family-led company with a strong ethos rooted in the values of *need, nurture,* and *nourishment*. Their commitment to providing high-quality, nutritionally balanced, and appealing meals aligns perfectly with our priorities at Collis. With a three-week rotating menu designed to suit a variety of tastes, a robust allergens policy, and a friendly, pupil-focused approach (including their popular mascot, Mr Nourish), we are confident Nourish will make a positive impact on our children's lunch experience.

Thank You for Your Feedback
Your feedback played a crucial role in this decision. Through surveys, general comments, and the invaluable work of our Parent Focus Group, we gained clear insight into what matters most to you and your children - from portion sizes and menu variety to food quality and enjoyment. This has been a parent-informed process, and we are grateful for your engagement and support.

Looking Ahead
The new contract begins in September 2025. Between now and then, we will work closely with Nourish to ensure a smooth and successful transition. Further details will be shared in due course, including sample menus, allergen guidance, and how we'll prepare the children for this positive change.

For more information about Nourish and their approach to school catering, please visit: **www.nourishcontractcatering.co.uk**

We are genuinely excited about this new chapter and look forward to seeing our pupils enjoy meals that fuel their learning, support their wellbeing, and reflect the high standards we hold at Collis.

Remember: all pupils from Reception to Year 6 receive free school meals, so we are aiming for 100% take-up once our new provider is up and running.

New Smartphone Policy at Collis Primary School

Following the joint Parent Focus Group and Collis Governing Body meeting held on Thursday 12th June 2025, it has been agreed that, from September 2025, pupils will no longer be permitted to bring smartphones onto the school site.

At Collis Primary School, we believe that primary-aged children are not yet emotionally ready to manage the responsibilities that come with owning a smartphone. Access to the internet and social media platforms can present risks to children's wellbeing, safety, and development. Increasingly, staff have been required to deal with issues such as inappropriate messaging and online bullying - often originating from smartphone use outside of school - which are not appropriate or manageable for primary-aged pupils.

This change has been made collaboratively by staff, governors, and parents, many of whom have long expressed strong support for the policy. The Parent Focus Group has been actively involved in the policy change and has helped develop and implement this approach. Parents, particularly those with children in Years 5 and 6, have said this decision will help reduce the peer pressure around phone ownership and make it easier to manage their child's expectations.

The school recognises that some pupils in Years 5 and 6 walk to school independently, and parents may still wish for their child to have a phone for the journey to and from school. In these instances, we recommend the use of a basic mobile phone (sometimes known as a 'brick phone') that can only make calls and send texts. These devices meet safety needs without providing access to the internet or social media.

Although the school does not - and cannot - control decisions made by parents regarding device use at home, we are clear that smartphones will not be allowed on school premises from September 2025.

We are sharing this information now to give families ample time to make informed choices and avoid purchasing smartphones for school use over the summer, unaware of this policy change.

This decision supports a safer, calmer, and more focused learning environment - both in school and at home.

Further Reading: Supporting a Smartphone-Free Childhood
As you may have seen in the news and on social media, there is a growing movement of parents and educators backing the Smartphone-Free Childhood campaign. This national initiative encourages families to delay giving children smartphones (defined as devices with internet access and app capabilities) and instead consider safer, simpler alternatives - particularly during the primary years.

We wanted to share this campaign with you as it aligns with the principles behind our updated smartphone policy at Collis Primary.

Why delay smartphones?
The Smartphone-Free Childhood movement highlights growing concerns about the negative impact of smartphones and social media on children's wellbeing and development. While many children need to be contactable - for instance, when walking to and from school or during the summer holidays - this can be achieved with basic mobile phones that allow only calls and texts, or with GPS trackers, without exposing children to the risks associated with internet access.

Research shows that smartphones in childhood:

- Are linked to poor mental health, depression, and low self-esteem, especially in early adolescence (National Library of Medicine, 2019)
- Expose children to harmful content, including pornography, grooming, cyberbullying, and inappropriate material (Canadian Medical Association Journal, 2020)
- Reduce attention spans, affect brain development, and undermine the ability to concentrate (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, 2021)
- Limit childhood experiences, replacing time spent playing, interacting, and developing social skills (Prof. Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*, 2024)
- Can be highly addictive, with effects on the developing brain similar to those seen in gambling behaviour (Pew Research Centre, 2022)
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What the data tells us:

- 20% of UK 3-4 year olds already own a smartphone (The Guardian, 19 April 2024)
- 24% of 5-7 year olds have a smartphone (Ofcom, 19 April 2024)
- 91% of 11 year olds have a smartphone (The Guardian, 1 February 2024)

Collis Primary supports the campaign's aims:
We are lending our professional support to the Smartphone-Free Childhood campaign, which recommends that children do not have access to smartphones before the age of 14. This helps reduce social pressure - both on children and their parents - and sets a new, healthier cultural norm across communities. We encourage families to opt for a text/call-only phone or GPS tracker if a child needs to be contactable and to work together to challenge the assumption that children should have smartphones at an early age. From September, we will be displaying our support with a change in the school policy. The campaign has also been discussed across the Richmond Primary Heads' Network.

Learn more and get involved:

- **Smartphone-Free Schools Guide**: https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/schools-guide
- **Evidence & Research**: https://delaysmartphones.org.uk/evidence
- **Parent WhatsApp Group**: Join the national community

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Warm regards,

Kevin Hogston
Headteacher