



Dan Price
Cheshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

PHONE FREE EDUCATION

**LOCKING AWAY PHONES.
UNLOCKING POTENTIAL**

INFORMATION PACK - JUNE 2026



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National agenda

Many schools operate an '**out-of-sight**' policy in line with the Department of Education guidance and expectations.

Schools still have the **flexibility** around implementation.

Government is moving to make this **statutory via the Children's wellbeing and Schools Bill**.

With this change, we expect headteachers to move **quickly to implement** this.

Additionally, the Government is in the process of **introducing a number of restrictions on under 16s** such as a ban on them accessing and taking explicit images.

There is **strong political and public support** for government to move quickly to improve wellbeing and reduce harm.

National picture

79% of UK schools operate the lowest form of mobile phone ban.

3.5% of schools ban phones being brought to school outright.

7.9% of schools ask students to leave phones in a secure place.

1 in 5 teenagers are distracted by phones in lessons everyday.

13% of children aged 11-15 say their school never confiscates phones - even if the pupil breaks the rules.

Exclusion rates in schools with pouches are drastically falling as the addictive nature of smart phones are broken during the school day.

*Stats from School phone policies in England, Children's Commissioner April 2025 and Parentkin polling March 2025.



The Cheshire plan

The phone-free school initiative aims to make Cheshire the first county in the UK where **every state high school is phone-free during the school day**.

A new national framework has launched which helps schools purchase the pouches, in a simple and easy way.

Inspired by change, driven by community

The movement builds on the momentum of the national Phone-Free Education campaign, launched in Parliament in 2025 by Esther Ghey, whose daughter Brianna was tragically murdered in 2023.

Esther's campaign calls for a future where schools are safe spaces. Free from the pressures and risks of online life.

The idea

Students place their phone in secure, lockable pouches at the start of the school day and unlock them when they leave.

This simple change leads to:

- Fewer distractions in lessons
- Reduced online bullying and harmful exposure
- Improved engagement in school life



Dan Price's point of view

“ I want our county to be the first in the UK where **all** state high schools adopt lockable mobile phone pouches. ”

Safer schools mean safer communities. It's as simple as that. This is about cutting phone-related incidents, reducing harmful content and getting classrooms back on track.

The results speak for themselves: schools using phone pouches report around an 80% drop in safeguarding issues, along with better behaviour and attainment. That's why we're backing what works.

Early adopters are supporting others through an advisory board, sharing practical learning across Cheshire.

As Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, I'm committing up to £150,000 - taken from criminals - to fund this rollout, alongside exploring further savings through a county-wide approach.

Inspired by Esther Ghey's campaign, I'm confident we can make a real difference — safer schools, stronger communities, and better futures for our young people.

Dan Price
Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner



Esther Ghey's point of view

Brianna was constantly in trouble at school for using her phone. When I requested school records, I found **120 safeguarding logs** relating to her phone use, ranging from risks of child sexual exploitation to exposure to pro-anorexia content.

80% of secondary schools in England operate an 'out of sight' policy which we know doesn't work.

Without an effective ban in place, such as locking phones away during school hours, students will struggle with distraction, social pressure and exposure to extremely harmful content.

We are setting children up to fail when asking them to put these highly addictive devices in their bags and telling them not to look at them.

After seeing the success at Birchwood Community High School, I decided to launch the Phone-Free Education campaign. We're calling for a statutory ban on phones in schools, alongside funding for secure solutions to ensure this is available for **every single** child.

Since launching, thousands of parents, carers, teachers and headteachers have added their voices to our open letter. This shows just how urgent and widespread the issue is.

This is a health issue, a safeguarding issue and ultimately a societal issue. A small investment will have major benefits in years to come.

Esther Ghey

Campaigner, founder of Phone-Free Education



Dr Emily Sehmer's point of view

“Even when smartphones are tucked away in a child's school bag, pocket or locker, they will continue to **occupy a significant proportion** of a young person's working memory, leaving it impossible to give their full attention in the classroom”

Between 2012 and 2022, hospital admissions for child mental health concerns have increased by 64%. 514% for eating disorders alone.

With the rise of screen time and social media use in children, there has been a stark increase in low self-esteem, anxiety and depression, behaviour changes (including aggression and violence), inattention and impulsivity and sleep disorders.

There has been a rise in the radicalisation of vulnerable young men, influenced by extremist and misogynistic content, leading to an increase in violence and criminal activity. Young, pliable minds are manipulated on devices which are designed to keep them hooked.

The mere presence of these devices in school impedes on children's attention, safety, security and freedom to separate from the constraints of the online world, even if its just for 8hours a day.

Dr Emily Sehmer

Consultant child and adolescent psychiatrists, CAHMS

Case study

Early adopters

Birchwood Community High School rolled out the lockable phone pouches in 2024-25.

This replaced an 'out of sight' policy that had been implemented in the school for many years prior to this.



WATCH this 2 minute video of Birchwood High School in Warrington and see how the students start and end their day.

What difference does a year make?

Attendance & Behaviour

- 480 to 27 - Incidents connected to phones and social media.

That's a.....
94%

improvement in behaviour.

- 1.7% - improvement in school attendance.
- 8.1% - improvement in persistent absence.

Academic

- 42.9 to 47.8 - Attainment 8 score.
- 54% to 71% - English & Maths pass rate. A 17% improvement.

The 36th most improved school in the country at this pass rate.

- 24.7 to 40.1 - Disadvantaged pupils Attainment 8 score.

This shows how the impact on disadvantaged students has been immense.

PEX & Safeguarding

Permanent exclusions
3 down to 0

100%
improvement

Safeguarding incidents
- connected to internet, phone and social media use.

246 down to 48

81%
improvement

Other benefits



Staff voice improved

Teaching is easier and students are more engaged.



100% enrichment club attendance

20 mins enrichment during lunchtime with over 80 clubs on offer for every child in the school.



Library

Increased use of school library by all ages.



Children are being children

Noise of chatter and play at break and lunch times.

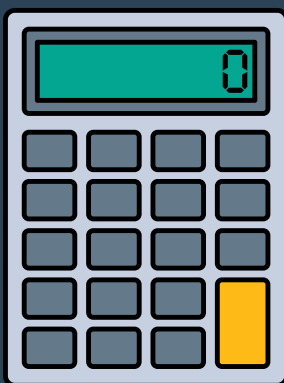


Funding information

£150,000 funding support over two years from Dan Price, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) **covers the cost** of the pouches for pupils on **free school meals**

£250,000 funding secured via a personal donation from the Duke of Westminster.

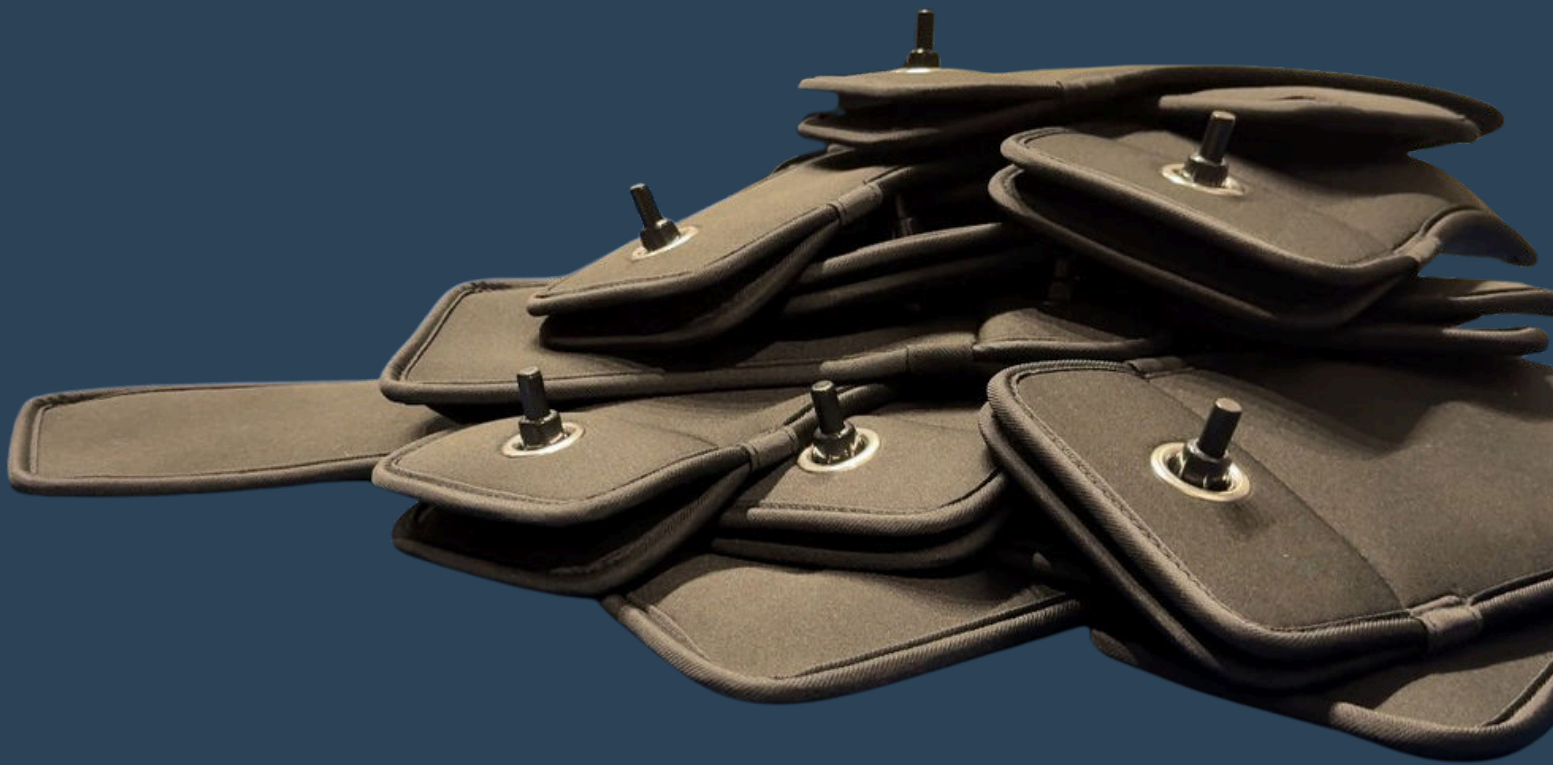
Wider funding is proportional to the percentage of **students not on free school meals** and calculated at £3 per pupil, for those attending state high schools.



Work out your costs

Use the online calculator to find out your implementation costs.

[Calculator](#)



Online buying portal

Online buying portal has now been launched. This portal has secured the **best rates and choice** for schools.

It is a **countrywide procurement framework** which is accessible **nationally**.

“ A full and fair process has been followed through a transparent tender process and in line with procurement regulations. It is being managed by Blue Light Commercial.
- **Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner team** ”



Online buying portal

[Access the portal here.](#)

['How to' guide to help with ordering is available here](#)



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**PHONE FREE
EDUCATION**

TOOLKIT



Internal communications for teaching and support staff

Please find a sample letter / email you can send to colleagues explaining the phone-free implementation.

Dear Colleagues,

As part of the Cheshire-wide Phone-Free Schools initiative led by the Police and Crime Commissioner, we will be strengthening our approach to mobile phone use from **[insert start date]**. A consistent daily routine will be introduced to ensure that students do not use their phones at any point during the school day.

Why this matters

Research and feedback from schools that have already moved to a fully phone-free environment report improvements in:

- Behaviour and readiness to learn
- Attention and participation in class
- Quality of social interaction
- Reduced cyberbullying and online conflict
- Student mental health and wellbeing

Many teachers report feeling more empowered, with fewer low-level disruptions and time spent challenging phone misuse.

What this means for staff

- The system selected by the school will support the existing phone policy by preventing phone access during lessons and social times.
- Staff should continue following the behaviour policy when a student does not follow instructions.
- Students must store their phones in the lockable phone pouch from arrival until leaving the site.
- Staff will receive guidance and a short briefing session before the system goes live.

A detailed implementation guide and FAQs will follow shortly. Your support is crucial to ensuring this is consistent and successful.

Thank you for all that you do every day.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

A selection of FAQs you can use / adapt to communicate with parents and carers.

What if I need to contact my child during the school day?

Parents/carers should contact the main school office. We will ensure any messages are shared with pupils if appropriate. Students will not have access to their phones during the school day.

What if my child needs to contact me?

If a student needs to speak to home urgently, they can request this access via the pastoral team or main office.

What about medical needs?

Students who require medical devices (such as continuous glucose monitors linked to a phone) will have their needs assessed and will have access to an adaptive lockable pouch issued to them individually. We will work with families and our staff to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard them.

What happens in a school emergency?

In an emergency, staff will follow the school's established safety procedures.

The school will contact parents/carers directly when appropriate. Phones can hinder emergency response by causing confusion and spreading misinformation, so this policy helps keep students safer.

Will my child's phone be safe?

Yes. Students will keep their phone securely in the lockable pouch and remain responsible for their device throughout the day.

What if a student refuses to follow the phone free procedure?

This will be treated as a breach of the behaviour policy. Sanctions will be in line with existing school expectations.

What if a student forgets or damages their lockable pouch?

The school will have loan pouches available and where this is not available their phone will be removed (in line with the behaviour policy) and kept safely until the end of the school day when they will be able to collect.

If the lockable pouch is lost or damaged, replacement costs may apply.

Will this slow down arrival or dismissal?

Initially, there may be some additional time spent entering the school but schools already using phone free systems report that routines become smooth and efficient within days.

Can my child bring their phone at all?

Yes. Phones are permitted for travel and safety outside school hours. They just cannot be used on site.

Example letter to parents / carers

Please find a sample letter / email you can send to parents / carers explaining the phone-free implementation.

Dear Parent/Carers,

We are writing to inform you of an important development in our school community. As part of a Cheshire-wide initiative led by the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Dan Price, we want all state high schools in the area to be working towards creating phone-free school environments. This change is aimed at improving learning, behaviour, wellbeing and safety for all students.

Our school already has a mobile phone policy in place, but from **[insert date]**, we will be implementing an enhanced, more consistent system to ensure that mobile phones are not used, seen, or heard during the school day. Students will be expected to store their mobile phones securely upon arrival and will not access them again until they leave the school site.

This approach is based on extensive evidence showing that limiting phone use during the school day has a significant positive impact on:

- Learning and academic progress
- Classroom engagement
- Behaviour and focus
- Social interactions and wellbeing
- Reduction of online harm, bullying and distraction

We will continue to educate students about responsible technology use as part of our curriculum, and we encourage families to support safe, positive digital habits at home. Parents are also invited to register for National Online Safety resources, which include guides on apps, privacy settings and digital wellbeing: <https://nationalcollege.com>

If you have questions, please contact the school via **[school enquiries email]**, or attend one of our drop-in information sessions on:

- **[Insert date/time]**
- **[Insert date/time]**

Thank you for your support as we work together to promote a safer, calmer and more focused learning environment for our students.

Kind regards,

[Headteacher name]

School behaviour policy

A policy document designed to explain the reasonings for having a phone-free policy, which you can use or adapt.

Phone-free school policy

To support a safe, calm and focused learning environment, the school operates a phone-free school day. This forms part of our statutory duty to safeguard students, promote good behaviour and maximise learning.

Purpose

The phone-free policy aims to:

- Reduce distractions and low-level disruption.
- Improve student engagement, social interaction and wellbeing.
- Protect students from online harm, bullying and inappropriate content during the school day.
- Support consistency across Cheshire as part of the county-wide Phone-Free Schools initiative led by the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

Expectations

- Students may bring a mobile phone to school for safety when travelling or paying for transport to and from school.
- Upon arrival, students must store their phone securely using the lockable phone pouches provided.
- Phones must not be used, seen, or heard anywhere on the school site during the school day.
- Phones may only be accessed once students leave the school premises at the end of the day.

Staff role

- All staff are expected to support and enforce the phone-free expectations consistently.
- Any student not following the policy should be addressed in line with the behaviour framework.

Non-compliance

Failure to follow the phone-free procedure will result in sanctions as set out in the school's Behaviour Policy and may include:

- Confiscation of the device until collected by a parent/carer.
- Reflection time, detention or further consequences depending on severity or repetition.

Exceptions

A limited number of approved exceptions may be made for:

- Medical needs requiring device connectivity.
- Additional SEND support, where agreed with the SENCO.

These will be authorised on a case-by-case basis.

Phone-free education funding 2026-27 T&Cs

The terms and conditions for the provision of grant funding.

Name of school:

Project lead:

Grant amount being claimed:

TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE PROVISION OF GRANT FUNDING

We understand we must:

- Use the grant solely for the above project in accordance with the Phone Free Education campaign and will keep a record of expenditure.
- Return the grant if the project does not proceed;
- Notify the Commissioner in the event that any match funding outlined in the application is withheld or required to be repaid and advise of the impact on the project. Copies/evidence of this match funding should be available on request;
- Meet the project timescales unless agreed to the contrary by the Commissioner in writing. The Commissioner must be informed of any delays in the project.
- Maintain and operate effective monitoring and financial management systems; and keep a record of expenditure funded partly or wholly by the Grant and retain all accounting records relating to this for a period of at least six years after the end of the Funding Period. Accounting records include original invoices, receipts, minutes from meetings, accounts, deeds, and any other relevant documentation, whether in writing or electronic form.
- The Commissioner reserves the right to request expenditure and income relating to this grant and project
- Deliver the outcomes outlined in the application and complete the monitoring report provided to share the results of the project to the Commissioner.
- Indemnify the Commissioner for any costs, claims, damages or losses which arise as a result of our negligence or out of any breach by us of these terms (indemnify broadly means to be responsible for and to compensate the Commissioner);
- Provide the Commissioner with the details of a nominated person who will act as a single point of contact for the duration of the project (this shall default to the details on the applicant email where further information is not provided);
- Assist and co-operate with the Commissioner to comply with his obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 whenever a request is made for information which relates to or arises out of this grant;
- Comply with the requirements of Data Protection legislation in connection with the protection of personal data; use the logo of the Police and Crime Commissioner on all advertising and other literature associated with the Project; and

We accept that:

- The Commissioner may require return of all or part of the grant funding in the event that the project is not delivered in accordance with the application and these terms and conditions;
- The Commissioner accepts no liability to us or any third party for any costs, claims, damages or losses, however they are incurred, except to the extent that they arise from personal injury or death that is caused by the negligence of the Commissioner; and
- Payment of the grant will be made in arrears within 30 days of receipt by the Commissioner of the signed pro-forma and appropriate bank details.

At the conclusion of the project the Commissioner requires any unspent funding to be returned.

If the Grant Recipient takes any action that the Commissioner perceives might damage the reputation of the Commissioner or his office (whether in connection with the project or not), then the Commissioner reserves the right to withdraw support from the project and request the return of the grant funding.

Signed

Date:

Project lead

For and on behalf of the grant recipient

New supplier form

A new supplier form for you to complete and return to sarah.tilling@cheshire-pcc.gov.uk in order to receive your funding reimbursement.

Request for supplier details

Supplier name*	
Supplier Address including postcode*	
Telephone number*	
E-mail for Purchase Orders	
E-mail for Remittance Orders	
Company registration number	
Supplier VAT number	
Is the supplier registered with HMRC under the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS)	Yes / No
If Yes to the above please provide either <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UTR (Unique Tax Reference)• National Insurance Number (Sole Traders only)	
Is the supplier an SME (Small and Medium Enterprise - less than 250 employees or less than £50m turnover)	Yes / No

***required information**

New supplier form cont'd

Bank details

Payments will be made by BACS

Account name	
Sort code	
Account number	
Signed by	
Job title	
Email address	
Contact number	

Reimbursement funding request

The reimbursement funding request form you need to complete and return to sarah.tilling@cheshire-pcc.gov.uk

School information

School name:

School address and postcode:

Lead contact name:

Lead contact email:

Number of pupils on roll:

Local authority where the school sits: (delete as appropriate)

Cheshire West and Chester Cheshire East Halton Warrington

Funding claim details

Reimbursement rates are £8.75 per free school meal (FSM) pupil and £3 per pupil for all other pupils.

Funding request	
a. Total number of pouches ordered	
b. Total cost of pouches purchased	£
c. Number of pupils on FSM	
d. Number of other pupils	
e. Reimbursement request for FSM (£8.75 x the number of FSM pupils)	£
f. Reimbursement request for all other pupils (£3 per pupil for all other pupils not included in FSM)	£
g. Total reimbursement request (e+f)	£

School declaration

I confirm that:

- The pouches have been purchased solely for the phone-free school initiative
- The information provided in this claim is true and accurate
- Supporting evidence (e.g. invoice from supplier) is attached for audit purposes

Signed:

Date:

Sample press release

A sample press release you can use / adapt to share with your local media

[School name] goes phone-free thanks to Cheshire PCC campaign

[School name] has introduced lockable phone pouches as part of a county-wide initiative by Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Dan Price, to keep mobile phones locked away during the school day.

The call to make education phone-free is being led nationally by Esther Ghey, who has called phone-free education "a simple step towards creating safer and more focused classrooms."

Cheshire's phone-free scheme launched in November 2025, with the PCC setting aside £150k over two years to support every state high school in Cheshire to adopt lockable phone pouches. Following this, The Duke of Westminster also pledged his support with a significant personal donation of £250,000, which was driven by his growing concerns around young people's mental health and online safety.

The initiative aims to make Cheshire the first county in the UK where all state high schools operate a phone-free approach.

By signing up, [School name] joins a growing number of schools introducing the pouches, which prevent access to mobile phones during the school day while allowing pupils to keep them safely in their possession. Other schools that wish to become phone-free can take advantage of an online buying portal set up by the PCC's office to get lockable phone pouches easily and at a competitive price.

[Headteacher name], [Job title] at [School name], said:

"We're proud to support the PCC's ambition to have 100% of state schools in Cheshire signed up to create phone-free learning environments. This is a positive step that will help our pupils concentrate in lessons and improve wellbeing."

The scheme is designed to tackle key issues linked to smartphone use in schools, including online bullying, exposure to harmful content and distraction from learning.

Schools already using phone pouches have reported major improvements (including an 81% drop in safeguarding incidents, 94% improvement in behaviour and academic attainment). Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner Dan Price said:

"From a crime prevention perspective, this is an absolute no-brainer - less online bullying, less access to harmful content, fewer distractions, and better outcomes for young people."

[Headteacher name] added:

"We're looking forward to working closely with our pupils, families and staff to make this a success and maximise the benefits for our whole school community."

Notes to editors

All students in Cheshire state high schools on free school meals will have their pouches fully funded by money donated by Dan Price and the Duke of Westminster's funding means that schools will be able to buy lockable phone pouches from as little as £3 each.

As well as funding, schools who participate will receive support from this initiative in the form of information materials for parents and pupils, implementation plans and expertise from those schools that have already rolled out pouches.

Sample social media posts

Sample social media post to share your phone-free news

Facebook

We're proud to be a phone-free school!



We've introduced lockable phone pouches to help create calmer classrooms, safer learning environments and more opportunities for students to focus, engage and thrive.

Phone-free schools are seeing real results, including significant reductions in phone-related safeguarding incidents and improvements in behaviour.

A huge thank you to Dan Price, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, for championing Phone-Free Education in Cheshire and leading the way to make us the first county where every state high school is phone-free.

Ready to make the switch? Find out how via the link below.

[Phone-free education | What we do | Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner](#)

X

We're proud to be a #phonefreeschool



Lockable phone pouches will help create calmer classrooms, better focus and fewer distractions.

Ready to unlock the benefits of phone-free education? Click the link below for more info.

[Phone-free education | What we do | Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner](#)

#phonefree #phonefreeeducation #crime #prevention #safercommunities
#highschools

Sample social media posts

Sample social media post to share your phone-free news

LinkedIn



Creating more opportunities for students to learn, connect and grow.

A phone-free school day is about more than removing distractions. It's about giving young people the chance to develop the skills they'll use throughout their life, from communication and teamwork to confidence and resilience. Skills beyond looking at their phone.

Considering a phone-free approach? Explore the benefits and find out more via the link below.

[Phone-free education | What we do | Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner](#)

#phonefree #phonefreeeducation #crime #prevention #safercommunities
#highschools #skills #workready

Instagram



Less scrolling. More social skills.

We're proud to be a phone-free school!

Creating more opportunities for students to build confidence, strengthen friendships and focus on what matters most.

Thinking about going phone-free? Find out more via the link in our bio.

[Phone-free education | What we do | Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner](#)

#phonefree #phonefreeeducation #crime #prevention #safercommunities
#highschools #skills #workready

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