

## The Nar Valley Federation of Church Academies

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Anne Neary

Web: [www.narvalleyfederation.co.uk](http://www.narvalleyfederation.co.uk)

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome back to school for the Autumn term from our team and we hope that everyone enjoyed some good family time. A very warm welcome to our new families and of course to our lovely new Reception children, most of whom I have managed to meet and start to get to know. We've welcomed some new staff members at each school and as always staff photos for each school will be coming out in next week's newsletter so that you know who everyone is and what class they are teaching in.

Summer reading challenge - if your children took part, congratulations and please bring in your medal to be presented in Collective worship.

Summer holiday competition; Healthy body, Healthy mind.

To support our work on helping our children understand how to develop good habits for strong mental health, we launched a competition last week in the newsletter, which was to design a poster with the slogan 'Healthy body, Healthy mind' on it, and lots of tips on how to have a healthy mind. I am delighted that some children have already told me they have an entry. It's not too late to do one now if you didn't over the Summer, so please bring in your entries by next Friday.

Smartphone ban in school: Many thanks for your responses to our survey asking for your opinions on this. We had 41 responses, and 36 were in favour of not allowing older children to bring smartphones to school and hand them in. We're liaising with the Trust to look at a policy with regard to this, so will communicate this. In the meantime, we'd appreciate those of you in support of children not bringing smartphones to school to ensure your child's phone is left at home. Many thanks. If you did not fill in the survey and want to let me know your thoughts, you're welcome to do so. If you'd like further reading, after our letter there is an extract from an article which was in the Telegraph recently.

Attendance and punctuality;

Term time holidays last year were much reduced, so thank you for your support. This had a really positive impact on children's learning and participation.

Just a reminder then not to book before talking to us so that we can discuss it together and reduce the impact of any necessary absence. Also, if your child has attendance of over 96% then that is likely to support any application. We really do not like having to apply for fines to be issued, so please do work with us, thank you.

Just a reminder that we have very good attendance and punctuality across our three schools on the whole, so please keep this up and remember that the school day begins at 8.40am; do ensure that your child is on school premises at 8.35am promptly in order to begin learning at 8.40am.

School Development Plan;

Last year in our school development plan, we were focusing on the following priorities:

- **To improve the outcomes in Writing and Maths**
- **Develop our new teaching so that children can confidently know and remember more**
- **Ensure each different subject is effectively driven forward.**

Obviously there are other aims for each of our schools, but these are the learning-focused ones. There was excellent work done in each area, resulting in improved outcomes for writing particularly, but with some strong outcomes for Reading, Writing and Maths across the three schools.

We were of course also focusing on our Ofsted inspections last year and were delighted with our two 'Good' outcomes, meaning that all three schools are Ofsted designated Good schools and that our strong work was recognised.

We remain ambitious for all our children to achieve their very best learning outcomes and work hard on our new development plan for that. Once this year's School development plan is finalised, based on analysis of the results last year, then I will share this with you in a future newsletter, as well as our SATS results from last year.

Family events across the Nar Valley Federation:

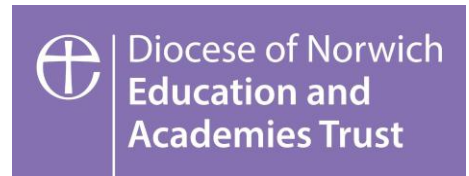
Why not come along to the next family event; this Sunday we have a choice of two! There is a lovely coffee and cake event in Sporle, the 'Lazy Sunday afternoon' from 2pm-5pm, or there is the Castle Acre Village Fete, also 2pm-5pm.

We will soon be publishing our dates for the year so that you are aware of all the exciting events taking place, such as Friends/PTFA meeting dates, Parent Cafe dates, our Parents'/Carers' Forums and our termly Church Services.

As always, we look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you so that your children enjoy school and learn well. See you soon, either on the gate or at the various events mentioned above.

With very best wishes

Mrs Anne Neary      Mrs Emma Spaul



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Telegraph article:

The Government is facing a major legal challenge over its failure to ban smartphones in schools, as parents, lawyers and child safety campaigners warn that pupils are being exposed to an "epidemic" of sexual abuse, bullying and educational decline.

In a hard-hitting legal letter sent to Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson, a new parents' group - Generation Alpha CIC - accuses the Government of unlawfully failing to protect children from serious harm during the school day.

They are now demanding a judicial review of the Government's current safeguarding policy, and a mandatory ban on smartphones in all schools.

The group, founded by two fathers, says the current government guidance is "vague" and "dangerously inadequate", despite the Department for Education admitting that smartphones are being used by some children in school to sexually harass, bully, share pornography, and exploit peers.

Will Orr-Ewing, co-founder of Generation Alpha CIC, said the group had been forced into legal action by the scale of the harm taking place daily in classrooms, changing rooms and on school buses.

"Like so many parents across the country we are asking, how can it be legal to let a child bring a device to school which allows them to show another child violent pornography?" he said

"Parents have told us about boys being filmed naked in the PE changing rooms and then shared across the school. Girls being manipulated by predators on messaging platforms during lessons and in school toilets. Tiny children being shown vile and graphic pornography by other kids on the school bus. A simple phone with no internet access allows us to keep in touch with our children. Adult smartphones are unnecessary and unsafe for children. It's a no-brainer to remove them from schools as quickly as possible."

The legal letter, drafted by Paul Conrathe and James Gardner of legal firm Conrathe Gardner LLP, lays out a devastating body of evidence that shows smartphones in schools are fuelling a surge in online harms.

Damning figures from their findings include:

- 79 per cent of young people have seen violent pornography before age 18 (Children's Commissioner)
- Sexual crimes against children committed online have risen by 400 per cent since 2013 (Commons Education Committee)

- One in five children has experienced online bullying - most of it at school (ONS)

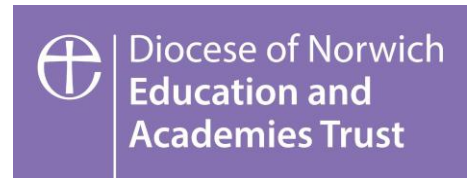
And vulnerable groups, including children in care, young carers and those with disabilities, are more likely to suffer from smartphone-related harms.

The case also highlights research from King's College London showing that one in four children use their phones in a way consistent with behavioural addiction. Other studies link digital distraction to lower academic performance. Students distracted by others using digital devices in class scored 15 points lower in maths, equivalent to three-quarters of a year's education lost.

The House of Commons Education Committee found that prolonged screen use reduces attention, memory, sleep quality, and social development in children aged 8-11.

Pete Montgomery, Generation Alpha CIC's other co-founder, revealed that freedom of information requests to 1,000 schools in England had uncovered shocking numbers of safeguarding incidents linked to smartphone use.

"One school passed 55 incidents to social services in the last academic year alone - 17 of those were referred to the police," he said. "A statutory ban is the only proportionate response to the reality of the threat posed by smartphones. The ubiquity of smartphones means headteachers need the full force of the law behind them to protect the school day from the harm we know these devices are doing."



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Allergy Aware Schools – Please do not send nuts into Nar Valley Federation Academies