

# WHITSTABLE Unplugged

## **Canterbury schools unite to tackle smartphone impact on pupils' learning**

*Over 25 schools and community leaders come together in Canterbury, with Rosie Duffield MP, to address the urgent challenge of smartphones in schools.*

*8 September 2025, Canterbury, Kent*

A large number of schools have met in Canterbury to discuss the impact of smartphones in schools across the district, with the aim of finding and implementing collective solutions.

The meeting on Friday 5 September was organised by Whitstable Unplugged, in partnership with leaders from The Canterbury Academy Trust, The Whitstable School, and Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys. The inaugural meeting addressed the growing impact of smartphones on pupils' education and was attended by 30 leaders from across the district, including Rosie Duffield MP for Canterbury.

Rosie Duffield MP said, "We're in a smartphone crisis, not just here in Kent but across the country, and the impact we're seeing now could have implications for years to come. Our time to act is now, and I'm proud that we've come together here in Canterbury to make a positive difference. I'm committed to keeping this issue on the Parliamentary Agenda and working with colleagues to ensure we protect our young people from the harms of smartphones."

Jon Watson, Chief Executive Officer of the Canterbury Academy Trust, and Chair of the emergency meeting, said, "As a head teacher, it's incredibly concerning to see the huge impact smartphones are having on young people's education. Despite schools having smartphone-free policies, pupils increasingly struggle to concentrate, and teachers are spending too much time dealing with issues related to smartphones. By bringing schools together in this way, we can find collective solutions and ultimately reverse the impact smartphones are having on education for young people, now and for future generations."

Isabelle Defaut, Artistic Director of the Portrait Theatre, Creator of Generation FOMO and member of Whitstable Unplugged said, "In creating Generation FOMO, I heard

shocking stories from young people across the region about their experiences of smartphones, from addiction, to bullying, anxiety and depression. Parental controls and smartphone policies in schools aren't working well enough, and young people desperately need our help. I believe if we work together as a community, young people can thrive alongside technology, not just survive technology.”

ENDS

### **About Whitstable Unplugged**

A local grassroots movement advocating for a more positive and balanced relationship with smartphones and social media in Whitstable. Whitstable Unplugged was launched to start a positive conversation about smartphones and social media for both adults and children.

### **About Generation FOMO**

Generation FOMO is a play by Isabelle Defaut, presented by Portrait Theatre. This verbatim play explores the experiences of young people using smartphones and social media and the impact on their mental health. Consisting of interviews with students from the University of Kent as well as primary and secondary school pupils, talking about their relationships ~with~ their phones and social media and the impact this has on their day-to-day lives. Also included are the voices of parents/carers, teachers and mental health professionals highlighting their concerns of navigating this ever-changing digital landscape. All interviewees remain anonymous.

### **Media contact:**

Amy Lawrence (ecnerwalyma@hotmail.com, 07813 777 919)

Gabrielle Grant (gabbylawson@yahoo.com, +44 7749 959266)