



January 2019

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

As the School will soon take part in the Safer Internet day, it is an appropriate time to remind the wider school community of the School's stance on the use of mobile phones and the rationale behind it.

In the press recently there have been a number of different (sometimes contradictory) stories about young people's use of social media and the negative effect it has on their mental and physical health.

It is over a decade since the exponential growth of social media began and research into this aspect of our modern lives is therefore still in its infancy. However, there are some trends of which we need to be aware.

Contrary to some of the articles that you may have read, we should recognise that social media has many potential positive influences on young people's lives, such as increasing social connections, helping with homework and enabling teenagers to develop their identities and share creative projects. Studies have identified some evidence of a beneficial impact on wellbeing, and young people recognise the value of opportunities to connect online.

However, research has also identified a range of risks associated with social media. The PISA Wellbeing study found that 'extreme internet users' (56% of UK teens fall into this category) were more likely to report bullying than moderate internet users. In the UK, extreme internet users also had a lower life satisfaction score than moderate internet users and a doubling in the incidence of mental health issues.

Clearly a balance has to be found. Moderate internet and social media use does not need to be feared and can form part of a healthy range of activities. Part of the challenge for parents and schools is to help the pupils find the balance so that they enjoy the internet without it negatively affecting other parts of their lives.

In school, pupils are taught how to use the internet safely in the PSHE programme. Pupils are taught about cyber bullying, the dangers of sharing information and the benefits of reducing their own screen time. It is for these reasons that we have chosen not to allow mobile phone use at school. Schools, which have banned mobiles, report reduced cyber bullying, greater participation in extra-curricular activities and improved pupil engagement in lessons.

Although pupils are permitted to bring their phones into school, they must be turned off and kept out of sight. As a school, we therefore would appreciate greatly if parents supported the School's stance and refrained from contacting their children by mobile phone during the school day. If a message needs to be given to a pupil, the School office will be more than happy to help.

Kind regards,

Mrs R Newbold
Mr R Lees

Headmistress: **Mrs J Anderson BA PGCE Med**
Headmaster: **Mr D Cassidy BSc**

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