Acceptable Use of Screens Policy

Note: links to forms are not included in the public version of this Policy on our website. Parents should contact the school if they need access to the forms.

Introduction

A distinctive culture

At Heritage School we are seeking to create a distinctive culture with respect to screens – one which strongly prioritises real world activities and relationships and intentionally limits screen use. This introduction explains why, and clarifies the scope and purposes of this policy. A central objective of this policy is to encourage an effective partnership between home and school and a common approach between families.

Fullness of life

Our goal is the healthiest possible development of children and young people in every area – intellectually, physically, morally, spiritually, emotionally, and socially – so that they can direct their own lives wisely toward that which is best. We help them get started, and our hope is that they will keep moving toward an ever fuller and richer life.

Clearly, healthy development depends upon fundamentals being in place, such as: physical safety and well-being, warm, secure relationships both inside and outside the home, and a plausible framework of meaning and value to help make sense of the world. Acquiring foundational intellectual skills such as reading, writing, maths is also essential for further engagement.

Building on these foundations, our conviction is that *we move toward fullness only as we engage for ourselves and develop meaningful real world relations*. This is what our curriculum is designed to encourage. 'Getting in touch' in this way – as human beings have been doing for millenia – with God, with others, and with nature gives us something in return. As we give our attention and open ourselves patiently, even reverently, to what each has to offer, these relations feed us. Our lives become more interconnected, more rooted, and more richly textured. We begin to see the whole, the right relationship between the parts, and the genuine significance of our contribution. Creative pathways open up to us. We grow in understanding and empathy, in appreciation and affection, in wonder and joy. We care more. We become larger people and we have more to give to others.

This vision of human flourishing and the convictions shaping the work of Heritage School are anchored in Christian tradition and are explained more fully on the [Our Vision](#), [Our Priorities](#), and [Our Ethos](#) pages of our website.

The place of technology

Human creativity has always included devising tools and techniques to make life better. This is part of what it means to be human and is to be celebrated. We are the beneficiaries of thousands of years of innovation. Over recent decades, developments in computers and communications technology have changed our lives significantly, and they have brought countless benefits.

Giving pupils the underlying and specific skills to engage creatively with technology is an important goal of our curriculum. For example, we deliver Computer Science lessons in Years 6-8 and we offer a Computer Science IGCSE. Through Computer Science, Maths, Biology, Chemistry and Physics the

necessary foundations are laid for pupils to study STEM subjects at A Level and beyond. Many of our former pupils have gone on to do so.

Technology within boundaries
Clearly, technology in general has an important role to play in human flourishing. However, not every technology, or every use of technology, is good for us, for our communities, or for the environment. When set within a plausible framework of meaning and value (such as the Christian tradition), it becomes obvious that there should be certain boundaries, or limits, to our use of technology: other factors come into play. It can, of course, be challenging to determine where the boundaries should be drawn in relation to each technology.

The focus of this policy: overuse and misuse
This policy is not addressing technology in general. Nor is it addressing screen use in general or particular screen technologies se per.

Rather, this policy is concerned solely with particular types of screen overuse and misuse. When using the term 'screens' it is primarily focussing upon uses of:
- the internet (including chat rooms, message boards, blogs, etc.),
- video streaming / watching (including YouTube, Netflix, etc.; also including television),
- social media (including apps such as Snapchat, Instagram, and WhatsApp), and
- gaming.

Hardware such as smartphones, smartwatches, laptops, tablets, televisions and other personal electronic devices also fall within the scope of this policy.

Limits upon screen time
In relation to these types of screen use – notwithstanding their many benefits – our view is that establishing time boundaries is essential. Statistics tell us, incredibly, that screen use has come to dominate our free time, indeed our waking hours.[1] From a historical perspective, the way that screens have become so deeply embedded into our lives in such a short space of time must be regarded as a social revolution, and it should raise significant questions.

In the light of our conviction that *we move toward fullness only as we engage for ourselves and develop meaningful real world relations*, the overwhelming dominance of screens in our free time is a concern for at least three fundamental reasons:

1. Screen-based forms of communication and entertainment are different in nature to real world relationships and activities. The medium and characteristics of the screen itself dominates the experience. In many important respects screens get in the way; they can disconnect us. They offer at best *a partial relation*.

2. Screen overuse is *displacing wholesome real world relationships and activities*, such as sport, music, art, playing with toys, cooking, being outdoors, gardening, reading, etc. Screen overuse is having a negative impact upon sleep and in-person socialising with friends.[2]

3. Screen overuse is *undermining attention and initiative*. Social media, certain apps, games, and video streaming platforms are designed to capture and hold our attention and make us passive consumers – so that they can make money from us through subscriptions or by selling our time and attention to advertisers. They consciously exploit weaknesses in human psychology.[3] Their attractive power and incessant demands can undermine our power of self-direction (will power) and our ability to focus. Screen activities can dominate our

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[1] The average adult spends 8 hrs and 45 mins per day using media and communications services, more than time spent sleeping, according to *The Communications Market Report* 2016 (Ofcom). See the [Media Nations: UK 2022](#) report and the [Online Nation 2022](#) report for more up-to-date statistics.

[2] See [The health impacts of screen time: a guide for clinicians and parents](#), p.4.

[3] See, for example, the book [*Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention – and How to Think Deeply Again*](#) by Johan Hari (2022); [The Techwise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in its Proper Place](#) by Andy Crouch (2017); the recent Church of England report [Big Tech](#) (2022); the Netflix documentary 'The Social Dilemma' (2020).

imaginative life. We can become impatient with silence, slowness, boredom, and effort – all essential conditions for insight and creativity and the deepening of relations. There is a related serious concern about the impact of these technologies upon citizenship and political culture.[4]

Limits upon screen content

It is also clear that limits upon screen content are necessary, due to the existence in the online world of *harmful content, images and videos*, particularly pornography.[5]

The online world could be likened to a megacity. It contains much that is valuable and stimulating.
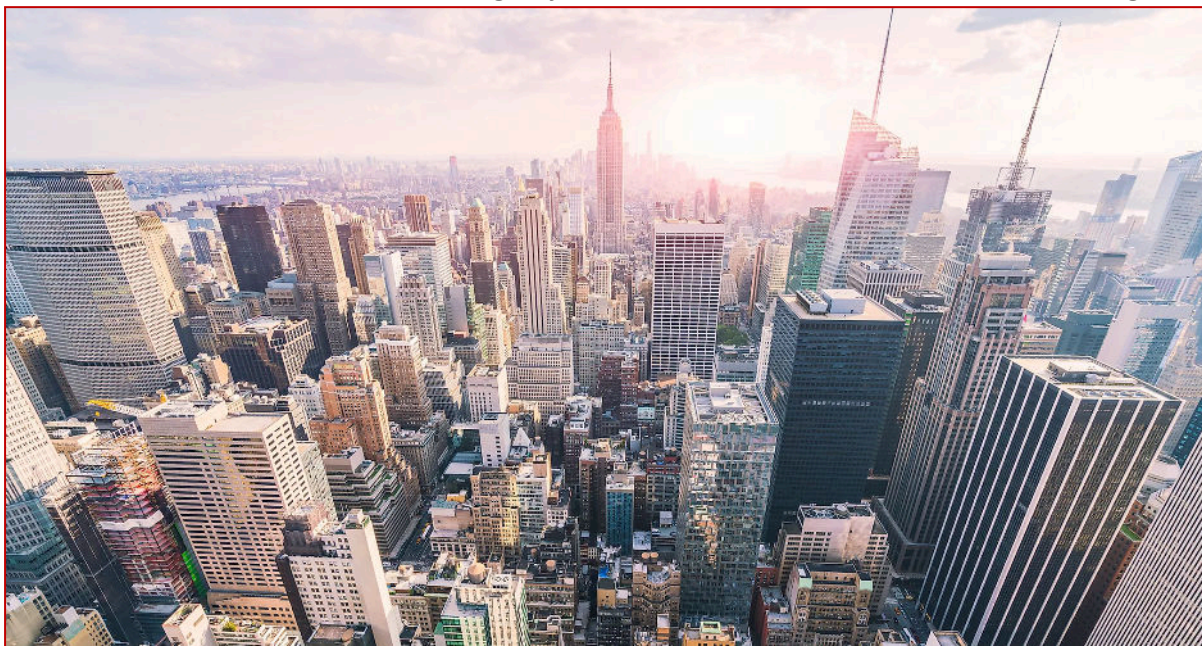
However, a megacity will also contain dark places and dangerous people. No responsible adult would consider sending a child into a megacity alone. Indeed, wise adults would be very cautious about going to certain places on their own and putting themselves in the way of temptation or danger.

Purposes

The purposes of this policy are to:
- Explain the convictions which guide the approach of the school to screen use (see above),
- Explain what the school does to promote the acceptable use of screens,
- Explain our expectations for pupils with respect to screen use,
- Explain the school's policy regarding phones and other personal electronic devices,
- Encourage partnership between home and school with respect to acceptable screen use,
- Encourage pupils and families to participate in our 'digital detox' opportunities,
- Outline (in the Appendix) specific risks associated with screen use and identify resources parents might find helpful.

Role of the School

The school plays an important role in the acceptable use of screens by establishing and promoting a culture that is oriented toward real world relationships and activities. We recognise that habits established in childhood and teen years are particularly important, as they can shape patterns for life.

The school promotes the acceptable use of screens through its own limited use of screens during routine teaching, through PSHE lessons which promote wise self-management of screen use, through the Screen Use Agreement with Pupils, through its policy regarding personal devices, through the partnership that the school seeks to establish with parents, including the Screen Use Agreement with Parents, and through encouragement to participate in digital detox opportunities.

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[4] See, e.g.*Stand Out of Our Light: Freedom and Resistance in the Attention Economy* by James Williams (2018) .
[5] See https://fightthenewdrug.org/ to learn more about the harmful effects of porn and sexual exploitation.

Screens in the curriculum

As explained in the introduction, the school encourages pupils to engage for themselves and develop meaningful real world relations. Our approach to routine classroom learning is, therefore, intentionally low-tech. We do not supply pupils with ipads or tablets and we do not make use of interactive whiteboards. Because of our emphasis upon proactive pupil engagement we place a high priority upon 'the habit of attention', i.e. high levels of focus for appropriate lengths of time. The use of narration in the Junior School makes an important contribution to this.[6]

The school actively encourages pupils to creatively engage with technology, particularly through its Computer Science curriculum, which commences in Year 6, and through the Computer Science IGCSE.

Pupils are encouraged to be skillful users of online resources and systems. Independent research projects and other homework assignments provide opportunities to train pupils in how to conduct online research and find reliable sources of information. From Year 7, the school makes use of Google Classroom. All Senior pupils are given password protected Heritage School Google email accounts. Pupils receive guidance on how to access their school email and make use of Google Classroom.

PSHE

Through its PSHE curriculum the school teaches pupils about and helps them to balance the benefits of screen use with the general and specific risks associated with it. Pupils are educated in an age appropriate manner about the importance of safe and responsible (i.e. acceptable) use of screens, including the school's expectations for online behaviour by its pupils (see Expectations of Pupils below). The main areas of risk covered in our PSHE curriculum are identified in the Appendix to this policy.

Content filtering

The school has appropriate filtering systems in place to protect pupils from accessing inappropriate or harmful content when using the internet while connected to the school's network.

Personal Electronic Devices

General rule: no personal electronic devices for pupils

Pupils are not permitted to bring personal electronic devices to the school or on school trips, apart from specific exceptions identified below. This general prohibition applies, for example, to laptop computers, tablet computers, smartwatches, Kindles, cameras and ipods.

Specific exceptions may be agreed to this general prohibition where there are learning needs that necessitate the use of, for example, a laptop. Specific permission may be given for stand alone cameras on residential trips.

Exception: phones for safety reasons

Our strong preference is that pupils do not bring a phone to school. However, we recognise that there are legitimate safety reasons for doing so if they travel to/from school independently. They may need to contact parents in case of an emergency or to make collection arrangements away from the school site. Please note that these legitimate reasons apply only to normal school days; phones are not permitted on school trips.

If pupils bring phones to school our strong preference is that it is a simple phone (not internet enabled) rather than a smartphone. We strongly recommend that parents do not give their child a smartphone until they are at least 14-16 years old.

Please also note that where pupils bring phones to school, they should not be used on site prior to registration time or after 4pm without the prior permission of a teacher. Pupils attending after-school activities must leave their phones in their bags for the duration of the activity.

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[6] See https://heritageschool.org.uk/about-heritage/school-priorities/ for more information.

Phones Procedure (Seniors Only)

The following Phones Procedure must be adhered to for phones brought to school:

- Prior parental notification is required before a pupil brings a phone to school (see below).
- If a pupil brings a phone to school our preference is that it is an inexpensive simple phone (i.e. not internet enabled).
- Phones must be placed in a container during registration time.
- They should have a label on it with the child's name.
- The phone container will be taken to the School Office after registration time.
- It will be stored during the day in the School Office.
- The phone containers will be placed in the main entrance hall at 4pm, at the formal end of the school day.
- Pupils will collect their phones from the relevant container.
- A phone must not be used on school property before registration or after 4pm without prior permission from a teacher for a legitimate purpose (e.g. contacting parents about collection arrangements).

Please note that this procedure applies to Seniors only. If parents of pupils in Year 5 or Year 6 agree with the school for their child to travel independently, arrangements for bringing and storing a phone will be made on a case by case basis.

ACTION: Phone Notification Form for Parents of Seniors

If a Senior pupil is to bring a phone to school we require parents to inform the school in advance that their child will be doing so using this **Phone Notification Form for Parents**. Please click on the link to access the form.

Phone Notification Form for Parents of Seniors

In order for a pupil to bring a phone to school, a parent must agree to the following:

- ☐ It is **necessary** for my child to bring a phone to school because he/she travels to/from school independently and needs to be able to contact us in case of an emergency or to make collection arrangements:
- ☐ My child will bring the following type of phone to school:
  (1) Simple phone (not internet enabled, recommended by the school)
  (2) Smart phone (internet enabled, not recommended until at least age 14-16)
- ☐ My child will bring a phone to school
  (1) Every day of the week
  (2) On certain days of the week
  (3) Occasionally
- ☐ I confirm that I have read the Acceptable Use of Screens Policy.
- ☐ I release the school from liability for any loss or damage to my child's phone that may result from the storage of phones in keeping with the Acceptable Use of Screens Policy.
- ☐ I have discussed the Phones Procedure in the Acceptable Use of Screens Policy with my child. He/she agrees to hand in his/her phone at registration time and not use it on site (either before registration or after 4pm) without prior agreement from a teacher.

After you submit the form you will see an automatic confirmation message. It is then acceptable for your child to bring a phone to school in keeping with the Phones Procedure above.

Enforcement

We expect pupils to act in good faith and in keeping with this policy by handing in their phone each day. We expect parents to help enforce adherence to this policy by ensuring that their child does not bring personal electronic devices to school, apart from phones authorised for legitimate reasons, or on a school trip.

Any phones or other electronic devices that are discovered, including phones brought to school where the Phone Notification Form for Parents of Seniors has not been completed, or phones taken out of bags during after school activities without prior permission from a teacher, will be confiscated for one

week and parents will be notified. We reserve the right periodically to perform searches in keeping with the school's protocols. Further infringements of this policy will lead to an escalation of sanctions in accordance with our Behaviour Policy.

Expectations of Pupils
Pupil responsibility for their online behaviour

What pupils do and the way in which they relate to one another online can have a significant impact upon their well-being and that of others. As noted above, through its PSHE curriculum pupils are taught about general and specific risks associated with screen use and how to balance that against the benefits, and the school explains its expectations for pupils' online behaviour.

We expect pupils, at all times, to assume responsibility for themselves and their behaviour, including their online behaviour.

Screen Use Agreement with Senior Pupils

Our expectation for how pupils will behave online is expressed in our Screen Use Agreement with Pupils. It is for Senior School pupils only and is presented to them annually. They are asked to read it and tick all statements with which they agree, and then sign a hard copy.

Screen Use Agreement with Senior Pupils

Senior pupils are asked to complete this agreement year. They are asked to tick all statements with which they agree, and then sign a hard copy.

Integrity
- ☐ I understand what is meant by the 'disinhibition effect'. (It means that people tend to be less restrained in what they say or do online than they are in person.)
- ☐ I will do my best to avoid saying anything online, either to or about others, that I would not be prepared to say to that person face-to-face.

Inclusion
- ☐ I will do all that I can, both in-person and online, to make Heritage School an inclusive and friendly community (e.g. by including others when starting a social media group).
- ☐ I understand that not all pupils will want or be allowed to participate in the screen-based activities that I participate in. I understand that talking too much about such activities can make those who do not participate feel excluded.

Balance
- ☐ I will do my best to limit my screen use and prioritise real world relationships and activities.
- ☐ I understand that too much screen time can negatively affect sleep and physical activity/fitness, and that it can displace in-person socialising with friends and other wholesome activities.
- ☐ I understand that too much screen time can negatively affect my ability to focus (i.e. my attention) and the quality of my school work.

Safety
Harmful content
- ☐ I acknowledge that there is harmful content online that children and young people should not have access to.
- ☐ I will not search for, download, upload or forward to others material that is harmful to me or to others.
- ☐ I will not generate content that is harmful to others.

Harmful people
- ☐ I understand that there are harmful people who are active online and who try to take advantage of others (e.g. financially or sexually).

Misbehaviour online

If a pupil is aware of inappropriate online behaviour by other Heritage pupils they should talk to their parents about it immediately. Parents may be able to clarify or resolve the matter, including by talking with other parents. Where this is not possible parents and pupils should inform the school immediately. Misbehaviour between Heritage pupils online is a legitimate concern of the school and will be dealt with in keeping with our Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and our Safeguarding Policy.

Role of Parents

Home and school partnership

A central objective of this policy is to encourage effective partnership between home and school and a common approach between families. Parental involvement is essential because overuse and misuse of screens generally takes place outside of school hours. Where families embrace the convictions and recommendations of this policy, it makes it easier for other families to adhere to it which, in turn, strengthens the culture for the benefit of all.

Establish parental authority at an early age

It is a great advantage if parents establish their authority over the use of screens at an early age. Exercising parental responsibility over screen time and screen content is a normal part of family life and should be presented as a matter of fact.

Where this principle is established when children are young, it reduces conflict over screens later. As children get older, the reasons for regulating screen time and screen content should be discussed openly, so that they can weigh up for themselves the risks and benefits and, hopefully, internalise core values. For older children, it is appropriate to set screen time limits in discussion with them.

Open communication

The Appendix to this policy contains information about specific risks associated with screen use and links to helpful websites for additional information. It is vitally important that parents are familiar with the risks and, even more importantly, cultivate habits of open communication about screen use with their child(ren).

Parent control software

We urge all parents to make use of content filters and parent control software from an early age on all devices that children and young people have access to – to prevent them from accessing harmful screen content. This remains true up to age 16 and beyond, and it is especially important when parents choose to give a smartphone to their child.

Parent control software is also the best way to regulate screen time on smartphones. It enables parents to decide which applications can be accessed and how much time is appropriate on each. Parents can set overall time limits and deactivate a phone at night to protect healthy sleep patterns.

Here are some examples of parent control software: Qustodio; Family Link; NetNanny; Family Time.

No smartphone until at least age 14-16

Given the attractive power of smartphones and their applications, the risks associated with harmful screen content, and the developmental importance of prioritising real world activities and relationships, we strongly recommend that parents do not give their child a smartphone until they are at least 14-16 years old.

Consider a Light Phone
Rather than a smartphone, parents might like to consider a Light Phone. It is an attractive, minimal phone. Instead of being engineered to capture attention, it is designed to be as unobtrusive as possible and to ensure that the user remains in control. See https://www.thelightphone.com/ for more information.

ACTION: Screen Use Agreement with Parents
As a means of encouraging a common approach, we are asking all families to sign up to at least the Core Commitment of our Screen Use Agreement with Parents. Please click on the link to complete the form. It is divided into a Core Commitment and Recommended Commitments. We invite parents to sign up to this as part of our admissions process, and we invite all parents to renew their commitment each year in January.

Screen Use Agreement with Parents
To be renewed annually in January.

Core Commitment
Acceptable Use of Screens Policy
- ☐ We confirm that we have read the Acceptable Use of Screens Policy, including the Appendix: Online Risks & Useful Links.

Limits Upon Screen Time
- ☐ During our child(ren)'s free time, we will limit screen time and prioritise real world relationships and activities over screen-based ones.

Limits Upon Screen Content
- ☐ We will ensure there are content filters/controls on all devices our child(ren) has(have) access to, including smartphones (when they are given one), to ensure that harmful content such as pornography cannot be accessed.

Recommended Commitments
Screen Free Week Participation
- ☐ [Optional] We agree to participate as a family in the Heritage School annual Screen Free Week as an opportunity to prioritise real world relationships and activities and re-evaluate screen habits. (This takes place in June of each year. It applies to the use of screens for leisure purposes and does not preclude use of screens for work or essential communications.)

Protecting Healthy Sleep
- ☐ [Optional] We will not permit screens (e.g. a television or computer) to be installed in our child(ren)'s bedroom(s).
- ☐ [Optional] We will not permit portable screens (including laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc.) to be in our child(ren)'s bedroom(s) overnight.
- ☐ [Optional] We will establish a central charging station, not in a bedroom, where smartphones will be kept at night for all family members.

Age for a Smartphone
- ☐ [Optional] Given the power of smartphones and our desire to prioritise real world relationships and activities, we commit to not giving our child(ren) a smartphone until at least age 14-16.

Digital Detox Opportunities
Annual Screen Free Week
Families are strongly encouraged to opt into Screen Free Week. Our annual Screen Free Week takes place in June, when the weather is good and the days are long. It lasts seven days, starting at 8am on

a Monday morning. It is intended to create additional time for real world relationships and activities and an opportunity to re-imagine how screen use might be ordered differently.

Those who participate commit to not making use of screens for leisure purposes. Screen free week is not intended to compromise work or essential communications, although you may wish to take the opportunity to behave differently in these areas.

It involves saying 'no' to TV, the internet, movies, YouTube, video games, social media (except for essential practical communications), your favourite apps, online shopping, online news, etc. and saying 'yes' to time with family and friends, books, toys, sport, painting, music, climbing trees, walks, bikes, writing a story, cooking, baking, board games, museums, and so on!

Check-in Tech Scheme

In addition, at any time of year, we offer Senior pupils an opportunity to check-in their smartphone or the lead for their video game console or desktop computer to be stored securely by the school for a day, a weekend, a week or longer. It is up to the pupil to determine the length of time. The purpose of this scheme is to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their screen habits by providing them with a definite means to act on any concerns they may have.

For example, pupils might feel that they have become too preoccupied with social media or by their video games. They may wish to reduce distractions during a period of revision. Whatever the reason, the Check-in Tech Scheme is an opportunity for pupils to take a break at any time, for any length of time.

Pupils wishing to use the Check-in Tech Scheme should hand their smartphone or the lead for their games console to their registration tutor at registration time and complete the relevant form. Or, they can hand it in and complete the form before school in the School Office.

Comments Welcome

As noted above, a central objective of this policy is partnership between home and school and a common approach between families. We are eager to facilitate engagement and discussion about acceptable screen use. The school occasionally organises events for parents where there are presentations and discussion about screen use. Any comments that parents may wish to make about this policy that may help improve it for the future will be gratefully received. Please write to the Headmaster via the School Office.

Authorised by	J Fletcher, Headmaster
Date	January 2024

Review date	January 2025
Circulation	Staff and parents via website

Appendix: Online Risks & Useful Links

The purpose of this Appendix is to summarise risks associated with screen-based activity, and to provide links to useful websites that parents may find helpful.

It is vital that parents:
- take an interest in online activity and be aware of what your child is doing online,
- talk to children about online risks and how to manage them,
- be aware of trends in online activity generally.

The risks identified below are discussed with pupils through our PSHE programme.

The 4 Cs
One helpful way to summarise risks from screen-based activity is the 4 Cs:

Content
Being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content (e.g. pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antiSemitism, radicalisation and extremism);

Contact
Being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users (e.g. peer pressure, commercial advertising, and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom and/or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes);

Conduct
A pupil's personal online behaviour that can increase the likelihood of, or cause, harm (e.g. making, sending and receiving explicit images such as consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography), sharing other explicit images, and online bullying;

Commerce
Risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams.

Displacement of more wholesome activities
One of the most significant risks with screen use – given the exceptional amount of time the average person spends on screens – is the time not spent doing something more life enhancing and constructive. Time is finite, and sleep, exercise and in-person socialising are among those activities commonly displaced by screen use. What is not done can have a significant impact upon well-being.

Impact on attention
Excessive screen use habituates us to a certain type and rate of stimulation. Forms of screen use are recognised to be psychologically addictive. Excessive screen use can make it hard for us to cope with slower and more cognitively demanding tasks that require sustained focus (like reading or other academic tasks). This can have a negative impact upon academic performance.

Habituation to high levels of screen-based stimulation can have wider life implications. Those who are screen-stimulation dependent can enter a state where they are more reactive than proactive. This can compromise the reflective time necessary to make wise choices and achieve longer-term goals.

Cyberbullying
Once children begin using social media, they are at risk of online bullying (cyberbullying). The 'disinhibition effect' means that people tend to be less restrained in what they say or do online than they are in person. In addition, online bullying can readily intrude into spaces that were previously thought of as safe, due to the ease of access to messaging services. The emotional distress caused by online bullying can be severe.

Social media age limits

Parents should be aware of and enforce the age limits for setting up one's own social media account. Here are some examples:

- Facebook: 13 years old
- Instagram: 13 years old
- Tiktok: 13 years old
- Snapchat: 13 years old
- WhatsApp: 16 years old

Responding to cyberbullying

How pupils should respond to online bullying:

- Don't respond
- Don't retaliate
- Talk to a trusted adult
- Save the evidence
- Block the bully
- Don't be a bully
- Be a friend not a bystander

How parents should respond to online bullying

- Listen and take the child seriously
- Make sure the child is safe and feels safe
- Don't overreact
- Encourage the child not to retaliate
- Gather and save the evidence
- Encourage the child to solve the problem
- Teach self-esteem and resilience
- Encourage the child to reach out to friends
- Talk to the school if other children involved also attend the school

See our Anti Bullying Policy for more information.

Online sexual harrassment and sexual abuse

Sexting is the sharing of indecent photos intended to make a person appear more grown up or sexually appealing. It is increasingly normal in relationships today. It is important to emphasise that once an image is sent, the sender loses control over it. It is illegal to hold or share indecent photos of anyone under age 18; those who do so can be registered as sex offenders. Upskirting is also illegal. It is taking a sexually intrusive picture taken up a person's skirt or under their clothing.

See our Safeguarding Policy for more information about child-on-child abuse.

Reputational damage

Unguarded online activity such as sexting can cause damage to a young person's reputation and severe emotional distress. Putting any form of inappropriate content online, either text or images, will often resurface later, such as at a future job interview. Young people can also damage the reputation of an institution by posting inappropriate or untrue comments.

Pornography

Access to pornographic images or videos, or to other unsuitable content, has never been easier. The damage this can do to a young person's perception of healthy relationships, or his/her ability to conduct normal sexual relationships in the future, is profound. The number of young people reported to be accessing pornography online suggests this is one of the most serious threats in modern culture to healthy relationships.

Sexual exploitation

One form of online exploitation is grooming. Grooming is persuading or enticing others to act in a way they were not intending to. There can be various motives, including sexual exploitation. Those intent on exploitation will often operate under a false identity. It can take place through social media or

gaming platforms. It can lead to a child sharing too much information, including contact details or location sharing, direct contact via webcams, or agreeing to meet in person.

Financial exploitation

Children and young people need to be alert to various forms of financial exploitation online. A child or young person can be groomed for the purposes of financial exploitation. Phishing is sending emails purporting to be from reputable companies in order to induce individuals to reveal personal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers. Another risk is from online games where participants can spend money to acquire an advantage in the game.

Extremism and radicalisation

Extremism has been defined as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British Values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. It also includes calls for the death of armed service personnel serving at home or overseas. Radicalisation is the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.

See our Preventing Extremism Policy for more information.

Cybercrime

Young people can become involved in cybercrime, that is, criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. Examples include unauthorised access to computers ('hacking'), attempts to make a computer, network or website unavailable by overwhelming it, and making, supplying or obtaining malware (malicious software).

Computer viruses

Children and young people need to be aware of the risk from computer viruses to their own devices. Downloading files from all but the most trusted sources carries risk. This can especially be true from widely used illegal sites such as Putlocker (an illegal film distribution website).

Useful Links for Parents

Parent Control Software:
Qustodio
Family Link
NetNanny
Family Time

Guidance on keeping children safe online:
Parent Protect
Common Sense Media
Safer Internet
Childnet
NSPCC
Thinkuknow (run by CEOP, Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
Parentzone
Internet Matters
Ask About Games
Fight the new drug (The harms of pornography)