RE: Mobile Phones and Healthy Minds

Dear parents/guardians,

A reminder of our policy on mobile phones. Pupils are not allowed to use a mobile phone during the school day. Their phones must be kept switched off in their bags if they are even in school. As educational professionals, we understand the potential damage that smartphones can cause, and would strongly advise you to replace such handsets with basic phones capable of calling and texting, avoiding Apps and downloadable materials. Due to the rise in popularity of smart watches, the school stance on these is that they should not be used for notifications, calling or texts whilst in school. This feature should be turned off and smart watches will be treated as mobile phones if used.

If you need to contact your child during the school day, you should call the main reception on 01754 610000 and the school will get the message to your child. For non-urgent enquiries or information, please use the enquiries@skegnessgrammar.co.uk email address.

Teenagers need at least eight to ten hours of sleep a night for healthy development. Researchers have found poor-quality sleep associated with late-night mobile phone use was linked to a decline in mental health, such as depressed moods and declines in self-esteem and coping ability. As with everything, we need to teach our pupils how to use mobile phones and internet enabled devices such as smart watches safely. We have included some guidance for managing mobile phones and internet enabled devices below.

Manage your child's use of internet enabled devices by:

- Setting physical boundaries - do not allow mobile phones or internet enabled devices in bedrooms after a set time
- Using a separate alarm clock
- Turning off the Wi-Fi or putting limits on the amount of 3G or 4G data that can be used
- Controlling the passwords for all devices and apps
- Being good role models and putting your phone and tablet away too

Manage your child's use of social media by:

- Taking an interest in what they do online; pay particular attention to how they communicate with others. Be aware of Apps such as Yubo where children can join live video stream
- Talking about the social media sites they use and who they follow
- Encouraging reporting of inappropriate content to you or a teacher
- Educating children on virus'/fake news/social media hype
- Agreeing house rules on when and for how long they can go online, as well as which sites they can access and what to do if they receive inappropriate messages or material

Control what apps can be downloaded

One of the simplest ways to protect children's phone use is to manage what apps they are able to download, and then whether they can download additional content. This prevents them from playing unsuitable games, engaging in unsuitable discussions and spending on extras. As well as disabling app installations altogether, parents can set age limits for what apps and films are downloaded.

Android: On Android, app downloads and purchases are done through the Google Play app. Settings can be adjusted by opening Google Play, clicking on the Menu button in the top left corner, scrolling down and clicking on Settings which will take you to the Parental controls menu. Here you can restrict what content can be downloaded or purchased from Google Play based on a maturity level, and set a PIN code to stop your child from changing it back.

iOS: On iPhones, similar restrictions are found in the Settings app. Go to Settings, then General, then Restrictions. You then need to tap 'Enable Restrictions' which prompts you to create a Restrictions passcode. Once you have done that you can prevent apps from being downloaded, deleted, or set age appropriate limits.

Monitoring screen time and communications

Android and iOS: On new Android devices running 7.0 and higher and on iPhones running iOS 9 and higher, you can keep an eye on your child's screen time by downloading the Family Link app. Once set up, you can see how much time your child spends on their favourite apps with weekly or monthly activity reports, and set daily screen time limits.

To monitor your child's communications and keep them safe on both Andriod and iPhones you can also use the SafeToNet app. Once downloaded onto your child's phone, it uses software which contextualises messages that they are typing and block any inappropriate or damaging content.

How can children can get around your controls?

YouTube

Parents might have placed all the restrictions possible on phones so that your children cannot access explicit content, but they might still be able to access this via YouTube. Apple and Android phones won't place restrictions on what children can access on the video sharing site, these need to be done separately under settings. If this is not done, then children can bypass parental controls by going on YouTube to access explicit content. To counter this, you could download the YouTube Kids app, which is meant to be a safer and simpler version of YouTube for children. It also has a suite of parental controls, so you can add restrictions.

Instagram and Snapchat

We have included some additional advice from 'National Online Safety' on what parents need to know about Instagram and Snapchat. We hope this is useful, especially as most children are active users of both apps.

Passwords

It is difficult for strangers to guess someone's password, but children will often find this easier. People tend to have very similar passwords for their accounts and children can guess what these are, especially a four digit pin. Keep passwords different and avoid using memorable dates and places. This will mean children can't easily guess the password to bypass parental controls.

There are a number of parental-control programmes such as TeenSafe, NetNanny, My Mobile Watchdog, Qustodio, Mobile Guardian, MMGuardian and OurPact. Mobile Spy and PhoneSherrif are Android only. Some anti-malware vendors also offer control programs including Norton Family Premier, AVG Family Center, and ESET Parental Control.

Network blocking

Most British internet service providers offer age-related filtering services, which are designed to stop under 18s from seeing harmful or inappropriate content. Mobile network operators also provide filtering, and the largest UK networks may apply it by default to new phones. You usually have to be an age-verified adult bill payer to change this.

We have collected some research that we thought you might like to take a look at. Please note particularly, the final story. If executives at organisations like Google and Apple are actively sending their children to schools that are tech-free, it does raise some questions about why that might be the case.

Further reading and research:

- "Smartphones, teens, and unhappiness", *The Harvard Gazette*
https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/06/gse-phones-study/
- "Smartphones: The Dark Side", *BBC*
https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b9dzb6
- "Ban phones in schools, says minister Nick Gibb", *BBC*
https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47095053
- "Your Smartphone Reduces Your Brainpower, Even If It's Just Sitting There", *The Atlantic*
https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/08/a-sitting-phone-gathers-brain-dross/535476/
- Tech bosses limit their kids' time on smartphones: why shouldn't we?, *The Guardian*
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/12/tech-bosses-kids-time-smartphones-parents-mental-health
- A Silicon Valley School That Doesn't Compute, *New York Times*
https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/technology/at-waldorf-school-in-silicon-valley-technology-can-wait.html

Yours sincerely

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Snapchat is a photo sharing app for mobile phones and tablets. The app allows users to share images, videos and chat with friends. Users can share images and videos directly to specific friends, or through a 'story' shared with their entire friend list, which documents the previous 24 hours. In a study, Snapchat was ranked the 4th most negative app in terms of having an impact on young people's health and wellbeing, with children feeling that they can use the app Snapchat to "make you look pretty."

What parents need to know about
SNAPCHAT

EXPOSING YOUR CHILD'S EXACT LOCATION

The 'Snap Map' lets you share your EXACT location in real-time through a map on the app. The user's location updates when the app has been opened on the device. There is a warning on the Snapchat website about uploading images and videos to 'Our Story.' stating that "snaps you submit to 'Our Story' can still show up on the Map, no matter which location setting you choose!." When uploading to 'Our Story,' your child's image or video could appear in "Search results and Stories on or off Snapchat - today or in the future."

LENS EXPLORER

The 'Lens Studio' on Snapchat gives users the freedom to use their imagination to design their own filters for themselves and others to use. Snapchat states that the lenses users create "must comply with our Lens Studio Submission Guidelines and Community Guidelines and must be appropriate for Snapchatters ages 13+." The 'Lens Explorer' in the app now enables users to choose from thousands of these creations to alter their snaps. Anyone can create a lens for Snapchat, which gives opportunities for age-inappropriate content to be uploaded.

SCREENSHOTS & SAVED MESSAGES

While Snapchat's gimmick is that all photos, videos and text disappear eventually, users still have the capability to screenshot or record anything which has been sent to them. Users may sometimes forget that screenshotting is possible and send a compromising image or message to somebody who they think they trust. They may also accidentally send an image or message to somebody who they do not trust. Simply by pressing and holding a message, the user is able to save a message they have received, which can be screenshotted or used against them at a later date.

SNAPSTREAKS & ADDICTION

'Snap Streaks' are gained when snaps have been sent back and forth consecutively between friends. The longer that snaps are sent between users, the longer the streak becomes. Furthermore, Snapchat rewards users who have achieved high Snap Streaks, by gifting emojis, adding incentives for users to keep the streaks. Children invest time into making their streaks as long as possible, which can put an incredible amount of pressure on both themselves and their friendships.

SEXTING

Due to 'Snaps' disappearing, (users can even send a one-second photo or video), Snapchat has become the chosen platform for children and young people to send sexually explicit images or 'selfies.' Once a photo/video has been screenshotted, or recorded using another device or software, this can lead to further dangers, such as blackmail and cyberbullying. It is illegal to make, possess, download, store and share sexual images, photos and videos of a person under the age of 18. This also includes any sexual images, photos and videos that a child may have taken of themselves. However, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed, but taking formal action isn't in the public interest.

SNAP ORIGINALS

Through 'Snap Originals', users can watch content which has been created by Snapchat on the app, including comedy shows, drama, news and more. Additionally, there are new lenses and filters available, inspired by the 'snap originals' shows. This is another feature to encourage addiction.

Top Tips for Parents

THE RISKS OF SEXTING

It can be slightly awkward talking about this topic with your child, but if it helps them protect themselves, it is worth it. Talk to them about the consequences of sexting and make sure that they're aware of the risks. Ensure your child knows that 'Snaps' can be screenshotted. Teach them that if they post anything potentially embarrassing or harmful (either of themselves or someone else) it can have severe consequences as the message, image or video can be shared further.

REPORTING A STORY, LENS, FILTER, SNAP OR MESSAGE

If your child comes across inappropriate Snapchat content sent directly to them or in another person's story, advise them to report it immediately. This may include an inappropriate lens, filter, message or snap. To report an offensive lens, they should open the app and select the lens they want to report. An info button will appear above the lens. Click this, followed by the flag icon. This will send a report to Snapchat for further investigation. Reports can also be made on the Snapchat support website: support.snapchat.com.

USE 'GHOST MODE'

We highly recommend enabling 'Ghost Mode' on the app so that your child's location will no longer be visible to anyone on the 'Snap Map.' To enable this, go onto the Snap Map and tap the cog in the top-right corner. Here, change the setting to 'Ghost Mode.'

HOW TO DELETE A MESSAGE

Advise your child never to send any negative messages (or images through gallery in the chat on the app) as screenshots can still be taken. You should also advise your child to screenshot any negative comments they receive as the sender can also delete them. To delete a message, simply press and hold the sent message and press delete.

TURN OFF 'QUICK ADD'

'Quick Add' helps friends find each other on the app. This is based on mutual friends or if their number is in their phone book. Explain to your child that this feature can open up their profile to strangers. We highly recommend that your child turns off the 'Quick Add' feature. This can be done in the settings.

RESTRICT STORY VIEWS

Your child can add videos and images to their 'Story' throughout the day which will last for 24 hours. By default, anyone in a user's friends list can see their story. We recommend checking the privacy settings to ensure that this has not been edited. This can simply be done in the apps settings under the 'Who Can View My Story' section. The options to choose from are 'My Friends,' 'Everyone' or 'Custom' - we suggest that it is set to 'My Friends.'

Instagram is an image and video sharing app that allows users to share moments with the world. The app has a live streaming feature and additional add-ons, such as 'Boomerang,' 'Hyperlapse' and 'Layout,' which can be used to enhance their feed. Users can choose to add filters and make adjustments, such as brightness / contrast to their photos. To make their content more 'searchable,' users can include hashtags in their uploads to make them easier to find.

What parents need to know about INSTAGRAM

LIVE STREAMING TO STRANGERS

The live stream feature on Instagram allows users to connect with their friends and followers in real-time. Followers can comment on the video during the broadcast (which can be turned off in the settings). If your child has a private account, only their approved followers can see their story. It is important to note that they still may have followers that they do not know, which means they could be live streaming to strangers. A public account allows anybody to view their story. We suggest that your child goes through their followers list and blocks anyone they do not know. An additional risk with live streams is that your child may do something that they regret. This could be captured by a viewer taking a screenshot and then shared around the Internet.

IN-APP PAYMENTS

Instagram allows payments for products directly through the app. It operates under the same rules as Facebook Payments, which state that if you are under the age of 18, you can only use this feature with the involvement of a parent or guardian.

DAMAGE TO CONFIDENCE, BODY IMAGE & MENTAL HEALTH

When people use filters on their photos on Instagram, it can set unrealistic expectations and create feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem in children. Children may strive for a comparable number of 'likes' to a realistically edited with the risk of drastically lowering your child's confidence or sense of self-worth.

PHOTO / VIDEO SHARING

Posting photos and videos is Instagram's biggest selling point, but with sharing images comes risks. A photo which includes landmarks in the area, their school uniform, street name, house and even tagging in the location of the photo uploaded to Instagram can expose the child's location, making it easy to locate them. If their account is not set to private, anyone can access their account and see their location.

LOCATION TAGGING

Public locations can be added to a user's photos/videos and also to their stories. While this may seem like a good idea at the time, it can expose the location of your child. This is particularly more of a risk if it is on their story, as it is real time.

HIJACKED HASHTAGS

Like Twitter, hashtags are also an extremely prominent tool in Instagram and with that comes dangers for your child. One person may use a seemingly innocent hashtag with one particular thing in mind, and before you know it hundreds of people could be using the same hashtag for something inappropriate or dangerous that your child certainly shouldn't be exposed to.

INSTAGRAM TV

Instagram TV works similarly to YouTube. Users can watch videos from their favourite accounts on the platform, or create their own channel and post their own videos. It's important to note that anyone can create their own Instagram TV channel and you don't have to be friends with a person to follow an account and watch their videos. Ultimately, features are encouraging users to spend more time on the app, therefore it's important to set time limits and ensure their devices are not disturbing their sleep and performance at school.

Top Tips for Parents

REMOVE PAYMENT METHODS
If you are happy for your child to have a card associated with their Instagram account, we suggest adding a PIN which needs to be entered before making a payment; this will also help prevent unauthorised purchases. This can be added in the payment settings tab.

RESTRICT MESSAGES
If your child's account is not set to private, anybody can message them and reply to their stories. If they do wish to keep their account public, we strongly recommend changing the message reply settings to restrict who can message them.

USE A PRIVATE ACCOUNT
By default, any image or video your child uploads to Instagram is visible to anyone. A private account means that you have to approve a request if somebody wants to follow you and only people you approve will see your posts and videos.

FILTER INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS
Instagram announced on 1st May that they now have an 'anti-bullying' filter on the app. This new filter hides comments relating to a person's appearance or character, as well as threats to a person's wellbeing or health. The filter will also alert Instagram to repeated problems so they can take action against the user if necessary. This is an automatic filter, but it can be turned off. Make sure this is turned on in the app's settings.

TURN OFF SHARING
Even though this feature will not stop people from taking screenshots, it will stop others being able to directly share photos and videos from a story as a message to another user. This feature can be turned off in the settings. We also recommend turning off the feature which automatically shares photos and videos from a story to a Facebook account.

SOURCES:
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