

## Acceptable and Safe Use of Screens Policy

### Introduction

With respect to screen use by pupils at Heritage School, and in the light of our guiding principles, the purpose of this policy is to state:

- what we expect of parents,
- what we expect of pupils, and
- what Heritage School does in support of this policy.

The appendix explains in more detail the nature of online risks and how those risks can be managed.

### Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of our policy are:

- Face-to-face relationships, the real world and books should be prioritised over screens.
- There is a lack of balance in society generally, whereby the average adult spends 8 hrs and 45 mins per day using media and communications services, more than time spent sleeping.<sup>1</sup>
- The internet and communications technologies offer unprecedented advantages (e.g. access to information and ease of communication) as well as general and specific new risks.
- It is essential that adults regulate the amount of time children and teenagers spend on screens and to monitor the nature of their screen use to ensure it is acceptable and safe.
- Habits established in childhood and teen years are particularly significant as they tend to become patterns for life; the habit of balance must be established early and maintained throughout a child's formal education.
- Appropriate curriculum time should be set aside to explore and enjoy creative engagement with computers, with a particular focus upon programming.
- Pupils need to be made aware of and helped to manage the general and specific risks associated with screen use.

These principles have as their goal healthy childhood development.

### What we expect of parents: regulation of screen time

A central educational priority of Heritage School is the cultivation of the **habit of attention**, i.e. a child's ability to sustain concentrated mental work for an age appropriate length of time. Screen use, by contrast, tends to encourage 'surfing' to the next thing quickly, i.e. giving attention for short periods of time. A related priority is that our pupils should become **readers**, capable of engaging with a sustained narrative or argument, as opposed to the more 'instant gratification' offered by digital media. The impact of screen time upon **sleep patterns** is another concern; lack of sleep due to screen use can have a significant negative effect upon school performance.

It is essential, therefore, that parents regulate the amount of time that their children spend on screens (TV, DVDs, the internet, gaming, social media, smart-phones, etc.).

Our expectations is that parents of pupils at Heritage School will:

- limit screen time (recommendation: one hour per day maximum during term-time weekdays),
- actively promote independent reading and/or audiobooks at home; contact our librarian for ideas about books your child might enjoy reading,
- prioritise completion of homework over screen time,
- remove all screens from your child's bedroom, having them only in communal areas,
- ensure your child turns all screens off at least one hour before bedtime,
- make sure all smart-phones, tablets, etc. are kept in a central charging zone overnight (e.g. the kitchen) and not in bedrooms, and

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<sup>1</sup> *The Communications Market Report 2016*, Ofcom

- participate in our annual Screen Free Week each June as a tool for periodic re-evaluation of screen use.

Parents who do not regulate screen time will undermine the work of the school and damage their child(ren)'s academic prospects. If pupils do not appear to be getting enough sleep, appear unable to sustain concentration, or are not progressing in their independent reading, we will want to discuss with parents the nature and extent of screen use at home.

### **What we expect of pupils: no personal devices at school**

#### *Our policy regarding personal devices*

Pupils should not, under any circumstances, bring a smart phone (i.e. one with internet capability) to school, to a school event or on a school trip. This applies also to all other personal devices, including, for example, laptop computers, tablet computers, kindles, cameras and ipods. Exceptions may be made for stand alone cameras or kindle readers on residential trips.

On school trips, staff will always have phones to ensure safety or to be contacted in the event of an emergency.

#### *The exception of independent travel*

We make an exception for the purposes of safety in travel. A pupil may bring a non-smart phone (i.e. one without internet capabilities) to school if he/she travels independently. It is reassuring to parents if children have a phone in the event of a difficulty or emergency while travelling or to make practical arrangements after school. We assume Seniors will travel independently and, therefore, that they may be bringing a non-smart phone to school regularly. Y5 or Y6 pupils, for whom we have received specific authorisation from parents, may travel independently, and so may bring a non-smart phone into school.

#### *The procedure for those who bring non-smart phones or other personal devices to school*

For independent travellers who are given a phone for safety, please note the following:

- Only non-smart phones are acceptable. We recommend the most basic, inexpensive phones.
- Pupils must deposit their phones each day in the designated container in their form room at registration time.
- This container is taken to the office during the day for Seniors; Junior teachers keep the container in their desk.
- At the end of the day, pupils will collect their phones from their class container, under the supervision of a member of staff to make sure pupils take the correct phone.
- Phones must have name labels on them.
- We do not accept liability for anything more than the cost of the most basic 'dumb' phone, should any failure of the system described here lead to a phone being lost or stolen.

#### *Enforcement*

- We reserve the right periodically to search bags, blazers, etc. to make sure pupils are adhering to this policy.
- Any unauthorised devices that are discovered will be confiscated for one week without question or discussion. Further infringements of this policy will lead to devices being confiscated for a longer period and could lead to sanctions in accordance with our Behaviour Policy.

### **What we expect of pupils: online behaviour**

Where cyber-bullying comes to our attention and is linked to membership of the Heritage School community we will deal with such incidents in accordance with our Anti-Bullying Policy and our Behaviour Policy. Online bullying between pupils at Heritage School is a direct concern of the school. See the Appendix for guidance on how to deal with incidents of online bullying.

### **What Heritage School does to promote the acceptable and safe use of screens**

Heritage School takes numerous steps to promote the acceptable and safe use of screens.

- Healthy enjoyment of computer technology is encouraged through computing lessons in Years 6-8, through computing clubs and through computing enrichment activities.

- Firewall: a firewall is in operation on the school premises, preventing pupils and staff from accessing inappropriate content.
- PSHE curriculum: this focusses on both general risks associated with screen use and specific risks associated with online activity, including pornography. See the Appendix to this policy for key messages that are covered in our PSHE curriculum.
- Our no smart phone policy is designed to encourage pupils to enjoy face to face relationships, real world interest, and reading, and to protect pupils from risks associated with smart phones while on school sponsored activities.
- We encourage families to participate in Screen Free Week every June as a way of promoting balance and critical reflection on normal patterns.

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## Appendix: Online risks and risk management

There are general risks associated with screen use, including its impact upon attentiveness, independent reading and sleep patterns. Another general risk is imbalance or underdeveloped potential; time a child spends on screens is time he or she does not spend doing something else that could be more life enhancing and constructive (e.g. creative play or practicing a musical instrument). Screen activity is recognised to be psychologically addictive.

Beyond these general risks, there are specific risks associated with online activity, although it should be noted that abuse can take place wholly online. These risks can lead to significant harm and need to be taken seriously. Adults (teachers, parents, etc.) need to understand online risks and how to mitigate them. The following content is covered in the context of our PSHE programme.

### Online exploitation

The most severe risk children and young people face online is **grooming by strangers**. Grooming is persuading or enticing others online to act in a way they were not intending to. Those intent on exploitation will often be operating under a false identity or pretend to be someone he or she is not.

Grooming can have various goals, including:

- sexual exploitation,
- radicalisation (see our Preventing Extremism Policy),
- financial exploitation.

Grooming can take place through:

- Social media (instant messaging, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, etc.), which can lead to the sharing of too much information, including contact details. Social media platforms can reveal too much about a person, making it easier for someone intent on exploitation to feign interest and develop the relationship.
- Gaming against strangers, which can lead to exchanging personal contact information or financial information to buy in-game benefits.

Risks can also be associated with:

- GPS trackers used to identify location (e.g. on smart phones). Free apps can be downloaded to show where posts from popular social media sites/apps are coming from.
- Webcams. Video chats can lead to contact with strangers and include the possibility of grooming for the purposes of sexual exploitation or the sharing of indecent images which can be used to blackmail victims. Hackers have accessed webcams and have used images to blackmail victims.

### Online bullying (cyberbullying)

As use of social media increases into the teen years, children are exposed to the risk of online bullying. Hurtful, mean, or degrading comments online are made easier by the impersonal nature of the medium. The nature of the medium means there is less restraint. Furthermore, 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.

A particular risk is sexting, the sharing of indecent photos intended to make a person appear more grown up or sexually appealing. It is reported that sharing such images is increasingly normal in relationships today. It is important to emphasise that once an image is sent, the sender loses control over it. Onward sharing of that image can lead to severe emotional and reputational damage. It is illegal to hold or share indecent photos of anyone under age 18; those who do can be registered as sex offenders. It should be noted that a staff member managing a disclosure should never view or forward illegal images of a child.

### Pornography or other unsuitable content

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.

### **Online reputation**

Another risk young people face through unguarded online activity is damage to their reputation. Putting inappropriate content online, either text or images, will often resurface later (e.g. at a future job interview).

Young people can also damage the reputation of an institution by posting inappropriate or untrue comments.

Note: Facebook (which also owns Whatsapp and Instagram) holds personal data as their property; it does not belong to the person who posted it and can appear in searches even after someone thought it was taken down. Also, phone cameras on Android systems automatically sync all photos (unless this is turned off) to the users Google account; these images can then be searched on Google images.

### **Computer viruses**

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).

### **Managing online risks**

Risks associated with online behaviours need to be reduced through discussion and education about the consequences that can follow from online behaviours.

It is, therefore, important that parents (and teachers):

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

Guidelines that we want to help our young people internalise include:

- Guard your personal contact information; do not share it online without checking first with your parents.
- Never agree to meet someone in person whom you've made contact with online without your parents being involved.
- Talk about it: tell your parents or trusted adults if someone or something upsets you.
- Be kind online: be aware that you will tend to say things online that you would be less likely to say face-to-face (see below).
- Stay away from pornography and adult-only websites.
- Stay safe with webcams; only use them with family and friends.
- Geo-location: make sure you are aware when this is being used; check the settings on your smart phones.
- Beware of scams and of potential viruses should you open or download something unfamiliar from an unknown source.
- Don't steal (e.g. films) and beware of potential viruses from file sharing websites.

### **Managing online bullying (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
- Be polite
- 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