

26th April 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

Before Easter, we surveyed all of the students across the school regarding their use of social media and computer games. The reason behind undertaking such a survey was due to the growing impact that social media and gaming is having on our students within school in terms of their levels of concentration and concerns nationally about cyberbullying, playing with strangers online and a lack of physical activity. These factors can lead to a lack of energy and motivation within the classroom and subsequently poor academic performance in exams.

We are sharing our findings with you so that we can work together to ensure that schoolwork, homework and revision are a priority, in order to develop the potential in all our students.

Below you will find a short summary of our findings from this whole-school survey and we hope that you can spare the time to read through the results in more detail on our website. In addition to the data collected from a whole-school perspective, we will also be posting the individual findings for each year group on our website as trends differ from one year group to another.

We would also be happy to send out your children's responses in order for you to see how they answered the survey, if requested.

Although modern technology, mobile phones and computer games have become an essential part of all of our daily lives, there are many dangers and distractions that can have a negative impact on the social, physical and academic development of our young students.

Key findings

- A large proportion of students say that their parents do not know just how frequently they are using social media or playing computer games and that doing this is their priority before completing any work at home.
- Many students, of all ages, are using social media more than ten times a day.
- Lots of students are actually going to bed after 11pm or after midnight due to their phone usage and more than 60% of students that play games are happy to do so with strangers.
- Many students say they would struggle emotionally if their access to social media was reduced.
- More than 60% of gamers have played/are playing 16+ and 18+ rated computer games on a regular basis.
- Social media users are more worried about app updates than the important issues surrounding cyberbullying, internet safety and privacy of personal data.
- 60% of students admit to being addicted to social media and gaming yet they believe that it doesn't get in the way of doing schoolwork, homework and revision.
- A fifth of our Year 11s are playing more than three hours a day of computer games.

We believe that these issues are impacting on our ability as a school to get the best out of our students on a daily basis and the widespread use of social media and computer games means that many of our students are unable to concentrate for sustained periods of time in class. This is currently having, and will continue to have, a detrimental effect on how well they can perform in internal and public examinations.

The key to academic success is the repetition of good learning habits and I am sure you will agree that completion of homework to a good standard, high quality and regular revision should be a priority before any earned social time.

As a school, we fully endorse the use of technology and devices to complete work but limiting the increasing use of, and the addiction to, phones and computer games is a national issue that affects all of us.

May we suggest the following tips to help guide our students about the appropriate use of social media and computer games in order to enable them to be better prepared socially, physically and academically as they develop into young adults.

- Complete the right amount of homework and revision each day soon after coming home whilst energy and concentration levels are high and the learning from that day is still fresh in the mind.
- Arrange a suitable desk from which to work from at home and limit the ability to be distracted by any devices or music whilst doing work. Several parents have already commented that taking phones off children until they have proven that they have completed sufficient work and earned their social time seems to work well.
- Ensure that our students are getting at least 7-8 hours sleep each night and that they are not going to bed with their phones on, as the blue light from these devices results in broken sleep and tiredness the next day.
- Have regular conversations about who our students are communicating and playing with online as there are an increasing number of incidents in the national press where vulnerable students are being exposed to dangers that are not suitable for their age group.
- Promote more outdoor activities and sports to counteract time spent indoors because a healthy body is a healthy mind.
- Use a variety of parental controls that can be implemented by your internet providers to limit usage and access to certain websites at several times during the day. This can be done by calling them and asking how to apply filters and restrict access to unwanted apps and websites.
- Apps such as 'Ourpact' allow phone access to be managed by parents by 'locking down' access at a specific time in the evening.

Technology is evolving at such a fast rate that it can often be difficult to keep up but we are determined as a school to work closely with parents to make sure that we give our students the best opportunities to succeed in life.

If you require any further help ensuring that your son/daughter is correctly using the internet, their devices and computer games, so as not to impact on their learning or, if you have any concerns at all on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

As mentioned above, individual surveys are available on request.

Yours faithfully

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