



3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024

## Re: Use of Mobile Phones/Social Media

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we navigate the challenges of raising teenagers and young people in the digital age, I wanted to address an important topic: the unsupervised and unmonitored use of mobile phones and social networks by our children. Almost all of the pastoral matters dealt with by our Heads of Year and Safeguarding Leads, involves the use of phones/social media misuse. You may have noted in recent press that the Australian government are trialling an under-16 ban on social media usage – a ban which could have a ripple effect, globally.

While technology offers many benefits, it also presents risks, especially when used without guidance. Unsupervised access to mobile phones and social networks can expose children to cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and online predators. It can also impact their mental health, leading to issues such as anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances.

Our goal is not to alarm you, but to provide support and practical advice on how to manage this aspect of your child's life. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Open Communication:** Encourage open and honest conversations with your child about their online activities. Discuss the potential dangers and the importance of privacy and respectful behaviour online.
2. **Set Boundaries:** Establish clear rules regarding mobile phone and social media use. This could include setting time limits, designating phone-free times (such as during meals or before bedtime), and monitoring their online interactions.
3. **Use Parental Controls:** Utilise the parental control features available on most devices and apps. These tools can help you monitor your child's online activity and restrict access to inappropriate content.
4. **Lead by Example:** Model healthy technology use yourself. Show your child that it's possible to enjoy technology while also engaging in offline activities.
5. **Encourage Alternative Activities:** Promote activities that do not involve screens. Here are some ideas:
  - o **Outdoor Activities:** Go for family walks, bike rides, or play sports together.
  - o **Hobbies:** Encourage your child to explore hobbies such as reading, drawing, playing a musical instrument, or cooking.
  - o **Family Time:** Spend quality time together playing board games, doing puzzles, or having a movie night.
6. **Stay Informed:** Keep yourself updated on the latest apps and social media platforms your child might be using. Understanding these platforms can help you guide your child more effectively.

Main School Office:

Upper Site: Mornington Road, Woodford Green, Essex, IG8 0TP | Telephone: 020 8504-3419

Lower Site: Sydney Road, Woodford Green, Essex, IG8 0TB | Telephone: 020 8504-8946



## Potential Risks Based on UK Statistics:

- **Mental Health:** [According to Ofcom, almost three-quarters of teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 have encountered one or more potential harms online<sup>1</sup>.](#) This exposure can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.
- **Cyberbullying:** [A significant number of children have experienced cyberbullying, which can severely affect their mood and self-esteem<sup>1</sup>.](#)
- **Sleep Disturbances:** [Excessive use of mobile phones, especially before bedtime, can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to fatigue and decreased academic performance<sup>1</sup>.](#)
- **Impact on Relationships:** Unsupervised use of social media can affect students' relationships, both online and offline. [It can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and a sense of isolation<sup>1</sup>.](#)

Our aim is to support and guide our children. By fostering a trusting and open relationship, we can help them navigate the digital world safely and responsibly.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Together, we can ensure our children have a balanced and healthy relationship with modern technology.

With best wishes,



Dr P.C Doherty OBE

Headmaster

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[www.tchs.org.uk](http://www.tchs.org.uk)

[info@tchs.org.uk](mailto:info@tchs.org.uk)

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