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Online Safety

Dear Parents/Carers

This week is healthy week in school. The theme for this year is 'Being healthy inside and out' with a key focus on mental health and general sleep hygiene. In our recent 'Our Voice Matters' survey in year 5, the results showed that:

97% of children have a mobile phone

100% of children have a tablet

40% use Whatsapp, Instagram or Snapchat

56% keep their phone in their bedroom at night

20% of children say that their time on devices is not limited

From an online safety perspective, healthy week is therefore an opportunity for us to explore the importance of limiting screen time, particularly before going to bed, in order to ensure that we understand how we can get the best night's sleep possible.

Three simple life hacks for reducing screen time (*Information taken from Parentinfo.org*)

There have been claims that children are harmed by excessive screen time, often suggesting a causal link with outcomes including obesity, mental health issues and low educational attainment. However, [a recent review of scientific literature](#) concluded there is 'essentially no evidence' for the statement that 'screen time is directly toxic to health'. The same report, however, warns that it is possible for screen time to have some negative impact by displacing positive activities such as socialising, good sleep, diet and exercise. If you feel as though you and your family could make some changes to get back in control of your screen time, here are some easy hacks to help you do it.

1. Get rid of unwanted notifications

Putting smartphones down is easier said than done and those vibrating notification buzzes are one of the things that keep making us pick them up. A lot of the time those notifications turn out to be just another marketing email or an app telling us it hasn't been used in a while — you can just turn them off.

Adjust your settings so you're only interrupted by the notifications you really need. Check when you last used each app — if it wasn't today or yesterday, turn off its notifications. That way you'll know that when your phone chimes, you are actually going to want to hear what it has to say.

2. Don't sleep with your phone

Having your phone next to your bed — or even under your pillow — makes it far too easy to grab it and get sucked into a mobile game or a YouTube video if you're struggling to go to sleep. Scrolling through messages, having long WhatsApp chats, checking your Instagram — they're all tempting when your phone is right there next to you. But it's not good for your sleep and it's definitely not good for children.



The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health recommends that children keep away from screens in the hour before bed as it could interfere with their sleep and they shouldn't sleep with devices in their bedrooms.

Choose a place to keep devices overnight and get everyone to stick to it. Be careful if you're tempted to charge them overnight though because that can pose a fire risk.

3. Try out wellbeing functions

If you're having a hard time putting the devices away there are plenty of wellbeing functions on phones, tablets and games consoles which might make it easier for you to clock in some offline time.

Phones/tablets: Having a usage-tracking app on your phone can make it easier to spot which areas you might want to cut back on. For example, Apple's 'Screen Time' gives you a full break-down of how you've been spending your screen time—dividing it into categories such as gaming, social media and entertainment.

Smart devices: If you have smart devices like Alexa or the Google Home range, play around with the digital wellbeing functions. Downtime turns off Google Home during preset periods — you'll get no notifications, other than alarms you've set, and you won't be able to use connected devices like Android TVs or Chromecasts.

Games consoles: Some consoles — like the Nintendo Switch — let parents set screen time limits for each day of the week. Your child will be given a gentle reminder when they've almost met their quota — then the console will go to sleep.

Digital 5-a-day

One concept which some year groups will be exploring this week is called the 'Digital 5-a-day'. The idea behind this is to ask children to reflect on their behaviours when using the internet. This might be something which you could talk about at home with your child further, for example by discussing examples of online behaviours which may fall into each of the categories below.



The Digital Dusk Challenge 2019

This week, your child will bring home a copy of their Digital Dusk Challenge. The idea is for them to monitor the time they spend offline, the alternative activities they do and the benefits they feel in terms of the amount of sleep they get and how they feel. Please encourage your child to complete the challenge and bring it back into school. We will be further discussing these within our classrooms this week.

Further Information and resources:

The health impacts of screen time for parents and carers - https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-12/rcpch_screen_time_guide_-_final.pdf

More sleep and less screen time may improve children's mental abilities - <https://www.nhs.uk/news/pregnancy-and-child/more-sleep-and-limiting-screen-time-may-improve-childrens-mental-abilities/>

Screen time and healthy balance - <https://www.childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals/for-working-with-young-people/hot-topics/screen-time-healthy-balance>

Information about 'Blue light' - <https://www.aop.org.uk/advice-and-support/for-patients/childrens-eye-health/screen-time-for-kids-facts-for-parents>

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding online safety issues, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Sanderson