Merchant Taylors' School

MTS GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS: USE OF MOBILE TELEPHONES

- The school believes that it has an important role to play in partnership with parents in promoting the wellbeing of each and every one of its pupils.

- The school recognises that excessive mobile phone use, screen-time and hyper-connectivity can have a deleterious effect on pupil wellbeing and that pupils using mobile phones are at increased risk of becoming involved in cyberbullying and misuse of AI.

- The school will seek to inculcate in pupils the benefits of a sensible and balanced approach to mobile phone use.

- The school will seek to implement an effective mobile-phone policy that educates pupils in the potential harm of excessive mobile phone use, that promotes good behaviour habits, and that engages with parents on this issue.

- Pupils do not need a smart phone at any point during their time in the school. From Year 9 onwards, they will need at least a basic 'brick' phone to be able to log into our systems with Two Factor Authentication.

- Pupils are reminded that misuse of phones outside of school will be investigated and dealt with following the Sanctions Policy, even when incidents occur outside of school hours.

Educating Pupils

The issues pertaining to mobile phone use are regularly revisited in a variety of different ways, including:

- <u>Year-group Assemblies.</u> The Thirds and Lower School receive a specific E-safety assembly annually, as well as a number of assemblies that touch upon wellbeing, good work habits, and courtesy and respect. The Middle and Upper Schools have a similar programme more appropriate to their age-range, including things such as good sleeping habits, social media protocols, digital hygiene and so on.

- <u>E-Safety Day.</u> This provides an opportunity for a whole-school focus in tutor periods, House Assemblies and, at least every other year, a visiting speaker.

- <u>Tutor Periods.</u> At various points in the year tutors will discuss these issues with their tutees using resources provided by the Head of House or other pastoral leader. This follows the year-long pastoral curriculum and includes Safer Internet Day in February, World Mental Health Day in October, and Mental Health Awareness Week in May.

- <u>Form Periods & PSHE</u>. Use of the internet, screen-time, good sleep habits, personal organisation and so on are part of the schemes of work followed by boys in their PSHE lessons and with their Form Teachers.

Promoting Good Behaviour & Habits

The school has put in place several strategies and procedures which support its mobile phone policy:

- <u>Mobile Phones – Use By Pupils.</u> The school has a specific code of conduct for the use of mobile phones by pupils which shall be rigorously enforced by all staff. Parents should be aware that this policy requires pupils to have their phones switched off during the School day.

- <u>IT Acceptable Use Policy.</u> This document, which is read and signed by all pupils, lays out clear expectations and standards regarding the use of IT both on and off the school site.

- <u>Homework</u>. Staff are asked to consider the need to use the internet and/or phones for homework and to be clear about when it is and is not required. In addition, Thirds and Lower School will have their homework tasks uploaded to MS Teams. This will not only negate the need for those pupils to record their own homework, but will also allow parents to see what tasks are required and by when, and whether use of computers is needed.

Parental Engagement

- Parents are asked to be familiar with the school rules regarding the use of mobile phones, in particular the document entitled Mobile Phones – Use By Pupils (copy enclosed and available on the school website), and to support the school in their enforcement.

- The school will look to include screen-time, mobile phone use and hyper-connectivity as topics for future Parental Information Evenings.

Parents are encouraged to do the following (specific advice on each of these can be found here: https://www.vodafone.co.uk/mobile/digital-parenting/digital-life):

- o Discuss with their child sensible limits to the amount of screen-time.

- o Implement a mobile phone curfew (e.g. phone away after 8pm at night)

- o Do not allow mobile phone/internet access in the bedroom at all (a cheap alarm clock and a book a good 'fixes'

- o Model where possible sensible mobile phone use.

- o Have "digital detox" days (or weeks) where online activity is curtailed (e.g. www.strong4life.com/pages/activity/articles/digital-detox-tips-for-the-whole-family)

- o Not contact their child during the school day via their mobile phone unless absolutely necessary.

Further Reading

Parents are encouraged to subscribe to Vodafone's free Digital Parenting Magazine, which is a one-stop shop for articles on issues such as limiting screen-time, technology addiction, being safe online and so on, as well as including detailed further references for those who wish to go further. The current issue, and back issues, are available here:
www.vodafone.co.uk/mobile/digital-parenting

Deputy Head (Pastoral)
June 2024