



Dear Parent / Carer,

In school we have had many conversations with parents regarding their concerns about how much time their children spend on 'screens' outside of school. I have also heard from parents who choose to limit their child's screen time and then feel that they, and their children, come under intense, subtle pressure because they feel that they are 'going against the prevalent screen based culture'.

We know that some of our children are heavy users of online games like Fortnite and also Social Media and that in some cases this continues very late into the evening – and early hours of the morning. Some of the language used in online games can often be very explicit. As well as not being good for the individual child involved, it also attracts their school friends and in doing so perpetuates the screen culture and its associated problems for more of our children. Consequently, we have some children in school who are often very tired and not ready to access their learning.

Screen time for your child is a parental choice and used appropriately can bring many benefits. However, in order to help those parents who would like some support we have outlined overleaf the advice that was released by The Chief Medical Officer last week. We have also included some further information regarding what parents can do to limit their children's screen time. We hope that you find this useful.

Kind Regards,

Mr Campen,

Deputy Headteacher.

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The new guidelines by the Chief Medical Officers outline some clear boundaries that should be set throughout the day, particularly around meal times and before bed:

Sleep matters

Getting enough, good quality sleep is very important. Leave phones outside the bedroom when it is bedtime.

Sharing sensibly

Talk about sharing photos and information online and how photos and words are sometimes manipulated. Parents and carers should never assume that children are happy for their photos to be shared. For everyone – when in doubt, don't upload!

Education matters

Make sure you and your children are aware of, and abide by, their school's policy on screen time.

Keep moving!

Everyone should take a break after a couple of hours sitting or lying down using a screen. It's good to get up and move about a bit.

Safety when out and about

Advise children to put their screens away while crossing the road or doing an activity that needs their full attention.

Talking helps

Talk with your children about using screens and what they are watching. A change in behaviour can be a sign they are distressed – make sure they know they can always speak to you or another responsible adult if they feel uncomfortable with screen or social media use.

Internet Matters has some tips to help you manage your children's screen time.

1. It's important to set a good example with your own device use. Children will model their behaviour on you, so make sure you're not glued to a screen every time they see you. When your children are having screen-free time, put your devices down too.
2. Get the whole family to unplug together and create screen-free zones of the house, such as bedrooms or the dinner table. This will encourage kids to talk more and not be absorbed in a device all the time
3. Talk to them about the amount of time they spend online and what they spend that time doing. Knowing what it is that keeps your child in a game can help with the discussions about managing their game time.
4. Persuade them to remove all devices from their bedrooms overnight, including phones and tablets, so they can't play for hours on end without you knowing.
5. Encourage them to find other interests, outside gaming, with you, with friends, or on their own.
6. Agree on an appropriate amount of time they can use their device. Set specified times for them to play. Rather than cutting them off mid-game when that time has elapsed (this would leave them with a genuine grievance if they are mid-match on FIFA, for example!) give them a countdown to turning off the console so they can finish what they are doing. Offer them a 10 minute warning, then a five minute warning before they have to finish. Do a deal that you will let them play once they have completed specific tasks, eg: cleaning their room, clearing the table, going outside and playing football, doing their homework etc. Then set a curfew for when they must finish
7. Technology can help. **BT's Parental Controls** let you set times when kids can't get online, so they can focus on doing their homework. There are other options, too. For example, the **Forest** app lets kids grow a beautiful forest in return for keeping their phone use within the set limit.

Be sensible and exercise some common sense and you'll set your kids up for a far healthier relationship with technology that will stand them in good stead later in their lives.