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DEAN CLOSE
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
CHELTENHAM

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14th May 2021

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

In our regular half term and end of term mailings, we like to include an update on popular apps and technology being used by pupils, recommendations linked with social media and topical links to sites aiming to support parents in the challenging world of monitoring your child's use and access to online opportunities. I hope you have found these articles helpful and relevant. Much of what is on offer online to your children is clearly fun, entertaining and stimulating, but a current trend we are facing in school at the moment is causing us considerable concern, and it is about this that I write to you today.

Social media sites have a tremendous attraction for young people and are very powerful and influential in their content. Irrespective of whether apps are legally available to certain aged children, we know that peer group pressure is difficult to ignore or avoid and children are accessing apps, such as Tik Tok, well below the advised age of 12 years old. As a result, some pupils are regularly being exposed to an assortment of bad language, 'liking' it without necessarily understanding it and on such a scale that it has normalised the use of swear words and foul phrases for some in our school. It is specifically this that I would like to draw your attention to.

In February 2020, research showed on average, children are spending 75 minutes per day on YouTube, closely followed by 69 minutes on Tik Tok, which has taken the social media world by storm and, amongst other things, is guilty of exposing young people to bad language well in advance of them understanding what it means or the effect it can have. It is with great sadness that as staff we are hearing this increased level of inappropriate language being used in school by some pupils and we are determined to try to stamp it out. It is not in line with our values nor the culture we engender in our community and is being used thoughtlessly, causing unhappiness for those within earshot. The perpetrators are being given a very clear message of zero tolerance every time, but we would like to appeal to you, the parent body, to join us in a collaborative response.

There are a number of very helpful sites aimed at offering support to parents and equipping them in monitoring their children's use and access to social media. I would encourage you to take a look at these so you are aware of the steps you can take to keep your child safe. Unfortunately, it cannot be assumed that your child will recognise the dangers they might be exposed to, nor the strong influence an app or website might have on them - this must be left to the adults in their lives to guide them through and those who have the responsibility, to check how they are choosing to use their devices.

The sites you may like to refer to are:

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/mobile/digital-parenting>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/>

In school, we ask all pupils to agree and sign an acceptable usage policy at the start of each year (for Chromebooks, this was at the start of this term), to be sure that everyone knows the expectations we have when using technology. Miss Rubringer goes through this with all pupils to ensure they understand the importance of taking responsibility for their use of a device, and I thought you might find it helpful to see what this document states. Next year, there will be a combined policy.

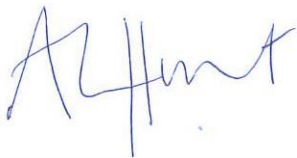
[Chromebook AUP - Google Forms.pdf](#)
[Using Computers and Other Devices.pdf](#)

I would like to reassure you that we will always listen and offer our support if you choose to raise an online incident which has occurred out of school involving pupils from DCPS, but we cannot be responsible for pupils' use of social media out of school hours (except in the case of our boarding community) and would appeal to you to over-see this, so that our young people grow up understanding what's acceptable and appropriate. Where the effects of any inappropriate use of technology spills over into school, we will respond as necessary and at our discretion. We need to keep one another informed of trends and potential dangers and this current spate of unkind, abusive and distasteful language needs a clear and collaborative message from school and home.

We are very grateful for your support in so many ways and recognise the shared goals we are working towards with every pupil in our care. The topic of online safety and the way in which pupils are exposed to inappropriate material is regularly reviewed in school and we hope that by reaching out to you in this way we can work more closely to reduce the effects of offensive content viewed online.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this further, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs L Hunt (alhunt@deanclose.org.uk).

Best wishes,



Louise Hunt
Head of Pastoral

