



34644/BF/RK
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Dear Parents and Carers

The Safe Use of Technology during Lockdown

I hope that you and your families have had a restful Easter break and are all keeping safe and well.

In light of the recent extension to lockdown, it is inevitable that technology will continue to play an even bigger part in our day-to-day lives and is thankfully allowing us to keep in regular, close contact with our family and friends, as well as keeping us entertained and able to work from home, where possible.

However, this rise in internet use has also led to an increase in online crime. Over the Easter weekend, you may have seen the Home Secretary's government update in which she revealed that online fraudsters have exploited this pandemic to con people out of £1.8million online. She also warned the public regarding the safety of children with their increased internet usage. Sadly, there are likely to be increased risks due to more people scouring the Internet for children working and socialising online.

During the Easter holidays, the government also issued key guidance for parents and carers regarding online safety. The document provides a wealth of information about the risks and harms young people might experience online as well as details for parents about the various resources and support options available. A copy of this guidance may be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online?utm_source=865f8028-810c-4441-8209-10a065d6079b&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily

At present, apps that are increasingly popular are Instagram, Snapchat & Tik Tok (however, as I'm sure you are aware, these change incredibly quickly). All of these apps stipulate that you need to be **at least 13 years old** to use the apps. WhatsApp has increased their age restriction in recent years to **16 years old**. It is also worth noting that there are a range of real-time face-to-face communication apps that are being used extensively at the moment such as FaceTime, Skype, Zoom & Houseparty. These have a range of differing age requirements, yet all carry the same risks to young people.

- FaceTime - has **no** age restriction, but requires users to have an Apple ID.
- Skype - has an age restriction of **13** as stated in their terms & conditions.
- Zoom - has an age restriction of **16** as stated in their terms & conditions.
- Houseparty - has an age restriction of **13** as stated in their terms & conditions.

Smartphones and tablets are often the devices that are the most challenging to manage, yet also the most likely to put young people at risk. Far from asking your children to stop using technology, we ask that you closely monitor what your children are doing online, whether it be whilst they are completing their school work or socialising with family and friends.



We understand that at present it can be incredibly difficult to effectively monitor your children's phones and devices. The Coronavirus lockdowns mean more time available to young people. Since their usual social lives are more limited, spending extra time in front of screens can seem like the only way out. We also understand that the majority of parents are now having to work from home and cannot always closely monitor their children all day.

Conversations with our students over time have revealed to us that the method they regard as most supportive of them and their safety is through having an open dialogue; talking about the current Coronavirus epidemic and how to achieve a digital balance during lockdown will hopefully continue to prove useful at ensuring that young people keep themselves safe online. Some suggestions include:

- Make a daily schedule together for online and offline time;
- Chat and communicate more during working breaks whereby the entire family has the same break in time from their daily work;
- Encourage time off-line whereby young people carry out other tasks such as cooking, exercising or watching a film with the family;
- Limit Screen time and agree this as a family;
- Carry out your daily walk or exercise outdoors together.

To support parents and carers there are also a range of websites and apps that provide information and guidance on the latest apps and trends. We've found useful sites to include;

- The NSPCC
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>
- Net Aware (A programme developed in partnership between O2 and the NSPCC)
<https://www.net-aware.org.uk>
- The Safety Centre
<https://oursafetycentre.co.uk>
- ThinkuKnow (The education programme from The National Crime Agency & CEOP)
<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

With the online world ever changing, the Nower Hill website is also continuing to be regularly updated to support new apps and developments. These resources can be found under the E-Safety link in the Parents and Carers tab on the main toolbar. There are also a range of apps and software on the market that parents can download to monitor and track their children's online activity. Whilst none of these are the perfect solution and often young people find a way around these apps, it is also worth noting that not all of these apps and software are free to use and some have differing features dependent on the package purchased or installed. Popular apps and software include:

- FamiSafe
- Kaspersky Safe Kids
- Norton Family Premier
- Qustodio
- Google Family Link for parents
- Microsoft families



NOWER HILL HIGH SCHOOL

If you do have any questions or queries regarding any of the issues raised in this letter, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us, using the admin@nowerhill.harrow.sch.uk address , and despite working remotely, we will ensure to get back to you.

Please do stay safe and well.

With best wishes

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