

Dear Parent/Carer,

The current Covid19 outbreak has led to an unavoidable and unprecedented rise in screen time for children and families. School closures and the lockdown have meant families are relying on technology to keep learning, entertained and connected to the outside world.

As we haven't been able to see people face-to-face, you might be using apps like Zoom and Skype to have video calls, doing quizzes and catching up with friends and family. It is important to ensure children have the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to keep themselves safe and have a healthy balance online.

When we think about online safety, we are often focused on not talking to strangers, giving out personal information etc. These are all important things to remember. But being safe online also means considering the implications it can have on your health, both physical and mental, and making sure you protect these as well.

How can I achieve a healthy balance?

Switch off

Why not consider a point in the day when you turn the devices off and find non-digital ways to engage with activities and have some fun. In this uncertain and unusual time, we all need healthy doses of physical activity, outdoor time, play and connection with family.

What sort of screen time?

There are different examples of screen time. Think about an hour spent on a piece of work using the computer and researching an assignment, compared to an hour scrolling Instagram or spent watching funny YouTube videos. Each activity needs to be considered. How does it make you feel? What is it teaching you? Do you feel better or worse after doing it?

Social interaction

Spending time on social media chatting with friends is positive if it allows you to interact and socialise during a time we cannot do this face-to face. However, if this isn't helping you, making you feel bad about yourself by reading comments or posts online that make you feel worried, insecure or inadequate, then it might be time to resort to some 'switch off time' and go for a walk/listen to music/read/dance/keep fit.

Talk about it!

A simple way to help balance online life is through discussion. As a family consider these questions:

1. What happens when you've been using technology for too long? (To your body? To your mood? To your device?)
2. How does technology benefit you on a daily basis?
3. Do you think technology ever has a negative impact on us?
4. What can we do about it? From tomorrow we will...

Useful Links

<https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/hot-topics/digital-wellbeing>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/digital-resilience-toolkit/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/social-media-and-mental-health/#how-can-i-have-a-more-positive-time-online?>

Quiz

For each of these questions answer: Never, Almost Never, Sometimes, Quite Often, Very Often. These questions relate to social and pleasure online use, not work.

- 1) How often do you find you have been online for longer than intended?
- 2) How often do you find you have not got enough time for your school work because you have been online?
- 3) When you are not online, are you thinking about the next time you can go online?
- 4) How often do you check your notifications before you start your school work?
- 5) Are you secretive about how much time you spend online?
- 6) Do you feel happier when you are online than when you are offline?
- 7) Do you pick up your smartphone to avoid talking to people?

Scores - Never = 0; Almost Never = 1; Sometimes = 2; Quite Often = 3; Very Often = 4.

This is a useful exercise to generate conversation about how we use screen time and how it makes us feel!

Please stay safe at this unprecedented time.

The Davison Safeguarding Team