

Digital Safety: Working in Partnership Between School and Home

At **The Cotswold School**, we are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to help ensure that all students remain safe, healthy and responsible in their use of technology. Developing positive digital habits and online safety awareness is an important part of preparing young people for their future education, employment and everyday life.

Working Together to Keep Young People Safe Online

Technology plays a significant role in the lives of young people, bringing many benefits for learning, communication and creativity. However, it is important that children are supported to use devices safely and responsibly, both in school and at home.

Research suggests that school mobile phone restrictions alone are not enough to address all of the challenges associated with screen time. Whilst schools can help create focused, distraction-free learning environments, the greatest impact comes when schools and families work together to promote healthy digital habits, appropriate boundaries and open conversations about online safety.

This is why The Cotswold School believes that a strong partnership between home and school is essential in helping young people develop safe and balanced relationships with technology.

The Cotswold School's Approach to Mobile Phones

Our priority is to create a calm, purposeful learning environment where students can focus fully on their education and wellbeing.

Students are expected to follow the school's mobile phone expectations at all times. However, we also recognise that mobile phones and social media are an important part of modern life and that young people need support in learning how to use them safely and responsibly.

For this reason, whilst mobile phones are not used during the school day, digital safety remains an important part of our wider pastoral and safeguarding curriculum. We encourage students to speak to staff if they have concerns about anything they encounter online, whether it occurs in or out of school.

What We Ask of Parents and Carers

We ask all parents and carers to:

- Support the school's mobile phone expectations.
- Work with us when sanctions related to phone use are applied.
- Encourage responsible and balanced use of technology at home.
- Maintain open conversations with their child about online experiences.
- Contact the school promptly if they have concerns about online safety, cyberbullying or inappropriate online behaviour.

Safeguarding concerns relating to online activity are always taken seriously, and we encourage families to share concerns with us at the earliest opportunity.

Supporting Healthy Digital Habits at Home

Every family is different, and parents and carers should consider what approaches work best for their child. The following guidance can help promote safer and healthier use of technology.

Understand Device Settings and Parental Controls

Familiarise yourself with the parental controls available on your child's devices, apps and networks. Many devices allow parents to:

- Limit screen time.
- Restrict access to particular apps.
- Set downtime periods.
- Monitor content and privacy settings.

Using these tools can help children develop healthy habits and reduce excessive screen use.

Agree Expectations Together

Talk openly with your child about:

- Online risks and how to stay safe.
- Appropriate screen time.
- Social media use.
- Digital wellbeing.

Where possible, establish expectations together so that boundaries are understood and seen as supportive rather than punitive.

Keep Conversations Open

Online safety should not be a one-off discussion. Regular conversations about social media, gaming, messaging apps and online experiences help children feel comfortable seeking support when needed.

Young people should know that they can speak to trusted adults at home or in school if they encounter anything that concerns them online.

Useful Resources for Parents and Carers

Vodafone Digital Parenting Hub

An excellent resource developed by Vodafone in partnership with the NSPCC, offering practical advice on:

- Parental controls
- Screen time management
- Social media safety
- Device settings
- Online wellbeing

Access the resource:

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/newscentre/smart-living/digital-parenting/>

Internet Matters

Internet Matters provides comprehensive, age-appropriate guidance and step-by-step parental control instructions for devices, networks, games and apps.

Access the resource:

<https://www.internetmatters.org>

Mobile Phone Expectations at The Cotswold School

To support learning, wellbeing and positive social interaction, students are expected to follow these expectations regarding mobile phones.

1. Mobile phones must be switched off and stored securely in students' bags before entering the school site.
2. Students are responsible for the security and safekeeping of their own device.
3. Any student seen using a mobile phone without permission will be subject to the school's behaviour procedures.
4. Failure to follow a member of staff's instruction regarding a mobile phone may result in the device being confiscated and collected by a parent or carer.
5. Students should not contact parents or carers during the school day without permission. If a student is unwell or requires support, school staff will contact home where necessary.
6. Homework, communication and learning resources will continue to be provided through the school's approved digital platforms, which can be accessed outside school hours.
7. In exceptional circumstances, teachers may authorise the use of phones for specific educational purposes, such as photography within coursework subjects.
8. On educational visits and trips, phone use will only be permitted where authorised by staff and where it supports learning, communication or trip arrangements.
9. Students who require a mobile phone to support a medical condition will have individual arrangements agreed with the school.

How We Support Students and Families

To ensure expectations are clear and consistently applied:

- Mobile phone expectations are communicated to students through assemblies and tutor time.
- Information is shared with parents and carers through school communications and the website.
- Staff receive guidance to ensure consistent implementation across the school.

- Digital safety education is delivered through our curriculum, pastoral programme and safeguarding work.
- Students are encouraged to seek support from trusted adults whenever they have concerns about online activity or digital safety.

By working together, we can help our young people develop the skills, knowledge and habits needed to use technology safely, responsibly and positively both now and in the future.