



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



18th October 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

It has been good to see so many of you at our different information evenings at the start of the academic year. From a welcome to our Year 7 parents, to the Pathways Evening looking at Post-16 options for our Year 11, it has been a busy start to the term. We always appreciate seeing people face to face and taking an opportunity to talk through and share how we work in the interest of your children.

On Wednesday, it was lovely to see so many parents and carers at our Year 7 and 8 Learning Together evening. This evening had three elements:

- Workshop 1: Coping with a knowledge heavy curriculum
- Workshop 2: 5-a-day for our mental wellbeing
- Workshop 3: Staying safe online

In each of the workshops we shared our thoughts on how you, as parents and carers, can support your son or daughter through the next few years. These evidence-informed strategies come from significant bodies of educational and medical research. Attached to this letter is a copy of the slides from the evening, in case you were unable to make it.

As part of our preparation for this evening, we completed an E-Safety survey with our Year 7, 8 and 9 students. As parents on the evening will have seen, some of the results of this are rather worrying, if perhaps, not all that surprising. At school we are fielding an increasing number of incidents between students that have taken place online. It would be a never-ending job if we sanctioned students for actions that they take while in their homes, they are after all at this time under your care, not ours. Nevertheless, we have been concerned in the last few years with the number, range and nature of these incidents.

From our survey, it is clear that some students have good routines and protections in the home around their use of electronic devices, however it is also clear that in many cases that boundaries are limited and access ever-present for some students. This worries us. Students were asked to complete the survey on their own and were told that their answers were completely confidential. There will always be some scope for peer bravado, but even taking this into account there are some concerning results, which I hope that you will not mind me sharing with you. We intend to conduct a similar survey for our Year 10 and 11 students after half-term.

Do you have an agreement at home about use of mobile devices? Eg. All devices left in the kitchen after 9.00pm:

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
60%	47%	36%

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Our experience would suggest that a family agreement is important for ALL school age students (and indeed for us as adults too). Some homes have an agreement about where devices are left overnight, some a time limit of use, some put boundaries on days of the week when no devices are allowed.

How much time each day (weekdays) do you spend on average using social networking sites?

	0-30 minutes	30 mins-1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	More than 3 hours
Year 7	25%	27%	32%	10%	19%
Year 8	16%	20%	22%	19%	32%
Year 9	9%	18%	23%	26%	38%

The mere length of this time for so many students causes me grave concern. In part, for the quality of their school work, but more importantly, on the detriment of other activities that would be more beneficial for their well-being.

Have you ever been the victim of cyber bullying?

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
16%	16%	13%

Have you seen something in the internet that you found upsetting?

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
47%	55%	69%

The more open the dialogue at home the more likely that when students do see things which upset them, the more likely they are to be able to share that with you.

Have you ever been asked to send photos or video of a sexual nature to someone?

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
6%	10%	29%

We are very clear with students about the illegal and concerning aspect of this. This is done alongside work on self-esteem and self-worth, which of course is the biggest safeguard that you can put in place for young people to prevent them from sending images.

Do parents know about everything that you look at on the internet?

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
70%	54%	45%

I hope that you will support us in helping young people navigate this digital world that we all now inhabit. Activities and boundaries at home form a really important part of this.

If you would like any further information, the following sites are very helpful:

Safer internet centre <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>

NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk

Yours sincerely

Julia Upton