

Senior Boys

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**MERCHANT
TAYLORS'
SCHOOLS**

For Boys and Girls
aged 4 to 18 years

11th June 2018

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Trial of a mobile phone free week during the week Monday 18th to Friday 22nd June

Each year we ask for feedback during Parent's Evening on a variety of aspects of school life from academic, pastoral, extra-curricular to communications. We value your responses and comments as it gives us the opportunity to reflect on a range of issues. Overwhelmingly, the feedback is very positive but with reflection we look to strive to make improvement. The following link will take you to the data we collected this year and as a means of comparison there is data spanning the last few years since 2012; <http://bit.ly/2sZeMvv>

One of the aspects we are concerned about and this is something that many parents raise with us is the ongoing battle with technology. In a rapidly evolving, media driven society technology plays an important part of all our lives. However, we do recognise that our current mobile phone policy needs to adapt and **we are going to trial a mobile phone free week during the week commencing 18th June**. During the week boys can still bring their phones into school and use them if directed by a member of staff. We recognise that work is set on Firefly and teachers will sometimes ask boys to use their phones for a task during a lesson. However, for the day whilst in school including all free time we do not expect boys to have phones out or be using them in any way. In the sixth form the only exception is that they may use them in their sixth form common room, but nowhere else. Our aim is to trial this with a view to making changes to the policy next year. A big part of this is educating the boys about appropriate use of technology and encouraging them to get involved in activities on offer or just get some fresh air running around, or dare I say it communicate in old fashioned ways! Even celebrities are giving up technology - Simon Cowell revealed recently that he hasn't used his mobile phone for 10 months.

We will prepare the boys in the week prior to the 18th through assemblies and discussions within form time. In those assemblies we will highlight some of the issues surrounding technology and the implications on their everyday life. Much has been raised about the impact technology has, not least on people's physical and mental health. There is a real concern about appropriate aged content whether it be on gaming, various social media platforms or access onto the internet. The impact on mental health is becoming widely documented (a couple of extracts from a recent publication the school received explored articles on 'What bothers young people' and 'Social media is harming the mental health of teenagers' <http://bit.ly/2JxUG6L>

During the assemblies there will be a short video that they will watch in preparation for the following week (link to this video is <https://youtu.be/i9uydDEez3c>) along with being presented with some data that has been collected by the HMC in conjunction with Digital Awareness UK. In this survey the summary of the main findings were:

- Children's biggest worry about being online is lack of sleep.
- Parents' biggest concern about their children being online is the impact on their social skills
- Over a third (36%) of children have asked their parents to stop checking **their** mobile devices
- Only 2% of parents said their biggest concern about their children's internet use was sexting despite data on the extent of the problem amongst teenagers. This was also true of the young people polled.

- There was also very low concern over cyberbullying and grooming
- Experts say they are shocked by the findings.

The full article from the HMC can be accessed through the following link: <http://bit.ly/2l8hfjv>. During the trial and afterwards we will get the boys to reflect on the challenges they faced not using their phones in school and follow this up in assemblies.

However, for the trial to succeed part of this process has to be ongoing communication between the school and parents so that we are educating the boys both in and out of school. In collaboration we hope to help our boys make the right decisions and use technology appropriately. We hope that by trialling the mobile phone free week this will be the first steps into shaping our mobile phone policy next year.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Green
Deputy Head Pastoral and Co-curricular

Links to other articles that have appeared in the press in recent weeks:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-44346270> (Simon Cowell ditches phone for 10 months and counting)

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/dec/15/schools-approach-to-mobile-phones-varies-widely-in-uk> (A tool or a distraction? How UK schools' approaches to mobile phones vary widely)

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/12/11/france-impose-total-ban-mobile-phones-schools/> (France to impose total ban on mobile phones in schools)

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/08/30/leading-private-school-forces-pupils-hand-mobilephones-effort/> (Leading private school forces pupils to hand in mobile phones in effort to wean them off 'addiction')