



Michael Hall

WALDORF SCHOOL

Use of Electronic Media: Guidelines for parents

Introduction

We recognise the value and place of electronic media in our lives. However, as teachers and carers of young people, we cannot stress strongly enough how careful we need to be to minimise the detrimental effects of screen exposure on young children, and of excessive exposure on older children who may not yet be able to moderate it themselves. The topic of media is often brought up at parents' evenings and individual meetings between teachers and parents.

As a school we recommend that children have zero to minimum exposure to screens before the age of nine, and that parents limit and monitor the effects of screen use thereafter.

We recognise that we live in a world where mobile phones and internet use dominate our everyday lives and we acknowledge that, as the children grow older, they become curious about the world and will encounter many aspects of it primarily through the internet.

When teachers and parents follow a similar approach on these issues and are conscious of the way they use the internet and the time they spend on a screen, it sets an example for the children. At school, we do not use our phones or our laptops in front of young children.

Phones

Smart phones should not be brought to school at all before Middle School.

Children who do not usually travel independently to and from school do not need to bring a mobile phone to school at all.

Children who need a phone because they travel alone should have one with which they can call or text but which does not have internet access.

All phones brought to school by children in classes 6 – 12 must be switched off and handed to the Class Teacher or Guardian on arrival. Latecomers are expected to hand in their phones at Reception.

Social Media, Gaming and Internet use at home

Because of the high incidence of online bullying and sexting, we strongly recommend that children do not have a social media account before Class 8.

If children have access to the internet before this age, we suggest that they do so in a communal space in the house (the living room or the kitchen for example) so that parents are aware of the content of what they watch/do online. If they have to do research for a school project, they can either do so with the help and supervision of their Class teacher at school or their parents at home.

We strongly recommend against video games while the children are too young to moderate their own use. They are not beneficial and can quickly become compulsive.

If children do play video games, it should happen occasionally as a special treat, rather than as an ordinary part of a child's life.

In the morning before school, we ask that parents do not allow children to watch screen-based entertainment or have access to social media or the internet. We realise that this is more difficult with teenagers, but parents should be aware that screen exposure before school interferes with their children's ability to engage with their lessons and will affect their learning and behaviour at school.

Screen time should also end at least two hours before going to sleep in the evening or it will interfere with the child's sleep.

It is our experience that children and young teenagers are not able to moderate their own screen use and are usually unwilling to acknowledge that this may be the reason for tiredness or distraction; they need the adults around them to intervene, however much they may resist.

We recommend using apps such as Google's Family Link, which connect children's devices with their parents' and allows them to, for example, turn off notifications from group chats for applications like WhatsApp on children's phones, or put limits on streaming services like Netflix so that parents can moderate and are aware of what their children are doing and watching online.

Digital Media use at school

Computers are used from Class 7 in school for research and writing, under teachers' supervision, and the students' dedicated WiFi is turned off during break and lunch. In addition, as part of their Humanities and English curriculums, Upper School students watch and study films and TV in lessons, learn about communications and information technology, look at advertising, marketing and propaganda and are encouraged to engage with media in a conscious, discerning manner.

Links with other policies

[Parent code of conduct](#)

[Positive Relationships Policy](#)

[Radiofrequency Policy](#)

Staff code of conduct

Student code of conduct

This website gives further information about the dangers of social media for children:

<https://www.waituntil8th.org>