

## Keeping your child safe on the internet

### Notes from Parent Forum

- Grooming and importance of students only accepting people they know on social media

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- The Dark Web – if this is mentioned by child then it would be wise for parent to contact the school – this is where all the dodgy dealings, criminal activity and radicalisation tends to go on.

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- The importance of having a good grip of students' mobile activity and the dangers in allowing students to have their phones connected to the internet when they go to bed – affecting sleep and could be when cyber bullying takes place as its much more difficult to keep an eye on what they are doing. Suggestion was making students leave their phones to charge overnight downstairs.

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- We discussed the different social media sites and the different dangers of each one (e.g. sexting with snapchat).

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- Incidents of cyber bullying are matters that the school will (and should!) investigate, even if it takes place outside of school hours.

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## How much screen time should I let my teenager have?

A new study says that up to six hours a day is perfectly normal, and unlikely to do any harm – as long as your child is doing fine at school and getting enough exercise

What parent hasn't tried to wrestle their teenager's phone away from them? For years, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended a maximum of two hours' screen time a day. Any more, it warned, and your child could get obese, sleep deprived and depressed. Research has also linked screen time to increases in risky behaviour, poor GCSE results and aggression. No wonder that screens, particularly iPads and smartphones that can be held under the bedcovers, have become a family battleground.

### The solution

According to a study published last week in the journal *Psychiatry Quarterly*, those battles might be unnecessary. The study analysed data from 6,089 teenagers in the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey in Florida. It asked about screen time, sleep, school grades, family eating patterns, depression, physical activity and risky behaviour such as carrying weapons, fighting at school, having sex while drunk and taking drugs. It found that up to six hours a day of screen time was nothing to worry about. The lead author, Christopher J Ferguson, from the department of psychology at Stetson University in Florida says that the AAP recommendation, which has now been lifted for over five-year-olds, was largely plucked from the air. "Based on this study, as well as another large study by Andrew Przybylski at Oxford, it looks like anything up to about six hours a day is pretty normal, and not associated with even minor negative outcomes," says Ferguson. "Screens are now pretty much woven into our lives. The whole concept of screen time is really different to what it was 20 years ago."

So we can perhaps try to relax and remember there have always been panics about whatever young people happen to be obsessed with. "We need only look back through history at Elvis Presley, comic books, Harry Potter, rock music in the 1980s and *Dungeons & Dragons*," says Ferguson. "So long as kids are doing OK in school and getting enough sleep and exercise, then – for most of them at least – screen use is not going to have a profound impact. Our lab recently published one study looking at violent media consumption, anxiety and depression, and found no evidence for links."

However, it is not being overly restrictive to insist your child stops looking at the screen an hour before bed and to keep devices outside the bedroom, or to encourage them to take exercise. It is also important to discuss the risks of social media.

But, all that said, there's still something about a screen and my teenager glued to it that makes me anxious.