

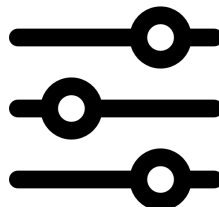
Adolescent Behaviour & Controls

IT Advice Sheets, Information Technology, ICHK Secondary



The pre-teen and teenage years encompass physiological maturation, social change, the search for identity and much else that we, as adults, might find it hard to remember and relate to. Some young people find this a period of seamless transition, without the need significantly to adjust their 'social persona' i.e. the person who they want others to take them to be. However, for others it can be a more turbulent experience.

For parents, some aspects of behaviour during this period can seem mysterious and confusing, and, given their social emphasis, have an increased tendency to be tied up with the use of digital devices. Establishing norms, expectations and routines around digital technology use before and during the start of Year 7 can help soften some of these behaviours.



A common response to adolescent behaviour is to apply blocking or monitoring controls to student devices.

As a school we do not recommend such controls for the majority of student laptops. They are rarely effective, give a false sense of security, and can encourage students to invest time and energy in finding ways to get around them. Rather, we recommend families to use in-person monitoring, and guide students should they go astray. **Our recommended starting point is to have students only use the laptop in a public room within the house, seated where the screen can be seen (e.g. at the dining table).** Parents can then monitor what students are doing, understand their habits, and help them develop. This can be aided by having students work without headphones on, so that you can hear what they hear.

It is recommended to agree to a maximum period of 'screen time' each evening, which we would suggest should be no more than an absolute maximum of 75 minutes, including

homework. You are encouraged to stick to your agreed maximum period, even if it means homework requiring use of the laptop remains unfinished. Having a set amount for personal use, such as 30 minutes, can also be useful. Our recommendation in Year 7 is that establishing good habits around computer discipline is vital. Our homework policy in the junior years is that children should be given ample time each evening to relax, engage in non-school related hobbies and interests, especially those which involve physical activity, reading books and spending time with family. The amount of homework set should never interfere with this wider aim in Years 7 and 8 - and especially so where the laptop is concerned. **If this tension becomes apparent, or is used as an excuse for additional screen time by your child, please let us know.**

When Year 7 students receive their laptops, they do not have administrative privileges, so there are some limits to what they can do. After a settling-in period of roughly two terms, we invite students to reflect on their use of digital technology, and, if it seems sensible, we extend their privileges, allowing them to do more. However, the exact timing of receiving extra privileges will depend on each individual's learning curve. Students who struggle, subsequently, with responsible usage may have these privileges rescinded, and in some exceptional cases, we may put in place extra controls. As the owners of the laptops, you may wish to add your own controls, in which case please do let us know, so we are informed as to what is going on. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that controls are never perfect, and, as mentioned above, can produce a dangerous, false sense of security.

Well-established good practice suggests that, as above, parents can be effective by providing clear guidelines for the use of the laptop, and openly discussing device-use habits as a family. The device is without doubt a vital tool for learning, but, as with all tools, it is open to both use and abuse. Our experience of many years tells us that it is of most value when students are clear that the responsible adults in their lives - parents, carers and teachers - have oversight of their habits in school and at home, and are ready to step in to help offer guidance when necessary.

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