



15th October 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

At Denton we have put great faith in one of our core values when it comes to the use of mobile phones in school: responsibility. We have trusted our students to behave in a responsible manner when using their mobile devices on the school BOYD wireless network – this provides safe, filtered access to the internet. Unfortunately, it has come to our attention that a number of students have downloaded 'VPN' apps which allow them to bypass the security settings and access the internet without any filters in place, and without us being able to ensure the sites they visit are suitable and safe. VPN apps can also be used by hackers to try to carry out malicious attacks – they take-over devices using the apps without the person using it realising what has happened, and then try to get into the network the device is linked to.

As a result of the students using these apps we have made the decision to turn off the school BYOD network, and are reviewing the use of mobile devices in school. We will be speaking to students about the importance of both of the above issues, and hope you will reinforce the message at home. I would also strongly encourage you to check that any VPN apps are removed from phones as they also enable students to bypass any parental controls you may have in place at home. The increased vulnerability to hacking is also a concern for home Wi-Fi networks, where firewall software may not be as robust as in school. Finally, please check that security updates are installed on mobile device operating systems as these provide an additional layer of protection for you.

Students will still be allowed to use their devices for now during social times, but we expect them to behave responsibly and courteously when doing so. Outside of social times the rules remain the same: mobile devices (and any headphones) must be turned off and out of sight, unless a teacher has specifically given permission during a lesson. If any mobile devices are seen students will be asked politely to put them away – if they do not do so the phones will be confiscated.

If you have further questions on matters to do with online safety I would encourage you to look at the ThinkUKnow website. This has a wide range of useful information (for parents and young people) and also has a facility to directly report dangerous online behaviour to the police's CEOP department. You can find links to this and other useful websites in the parents & carers section of our own website.

Now the nights are drawing in, it would also be worth having a conversation at home about safety on the way to and from school. These are some top tips about safety which may help prompt discussion:

- Walk home in **pairs** and **groups** where possible.
- Make sure you're **visible** to other road users and pedestrians.
- Keep away from the kerb - stay safely **on the pavement**.
- Wear **bright** or **fluorescent** clothing in daylight or poor light.
- Wear **reflective** clothing at night; it shows up in car headlights. Bright colours are not necessarily very visible after dark.

- Always **use your lights** when cycling after dark, in the rain or if the weather is overcast. Make sure your lights are working. It is illegal to ride a bike on the road with no lights after dark. White lights at the front and red at the rear. And of course **always** wear a cycling helmet!
- **Concentrate** on your journey - please don't text, listen to loud music or play games near roads.
- Try to **use well lit**, busier streets and avoid quiet or badly lit alleys.
- If you are not going on your usual route, **make sure** someone at home knows where you are going.
- If you are approached by any strangers do not speak to them - and **report it** to your parents immediately.

Finally, we are going to start a weekly parent bulletin so that we can keep you better informed of key events and information. We will be sending this out through our own school app and also by email. If you have a new email address please could you contact school so we can update our records and ensure we can keep you in touch with all the exciting news from school. And if you haven't seen the school app yet, then why not download it – it is free and works on Android and Apple devices. <https://www.myedschoolapp.com/>

Yours sincerely,

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