



# South Hampstead

High School

G D S T

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2018

Dear Parents,

I am Laura, a Deputy Head Girl at South Hampstead High School, and I am writing this letter to raise awareness about the impact of overuse of mobile phones and social media. Technology has huge benefits which we embrace as a school, but we also know that overdependence on mobile phones and social media can reduce our personal interactions and can affect our wellbeing.

We know that many parents share some of these thoughts and we have been developing something you may find useful. I have been working with a group of South Hampstead students to create a contract that you can use with your daughters to help assess and moderate phone usage. The contract we've created includes a number of suggestions and tips from our pupils that hope will be useful for your daughters, and maybe also for you. According to research by Digital Awareness UK, a national organisation which raises awareness of screen time, the single biggest concern of young people in relation to digital devices is their parents' use of them!

One problem with phones, laptops and iPads is that they emit blue/white light, which prevents our brains from releasing melatonin, which is the hormone that signals to our brain that it is bedtime. This means that it takes us longer to get to sleep when we use our phones before bed. From a recent Senior School survey we found that 68% of girls at South Hampstead use their phone in the hour before they go to sleep, so we want to encourage girls to turn their phones to the night setting and try to not use their phone in the hour before bed. Research by Digital Awareness UK, with 2,750 11 to 18 year olds in independent schools, found that one in 10 admitted checking their mobile phones for notifications at least 10 times a night. Additionally, 35% of students said that they use their phone while doing their homework. Using your phone while studying decreases your effectiveness and often means that you spend longer completing your work.

As part of my Psychology A Level, I completed a study with a fellow student to see if there was a correlation between self-esteem and Instagram usage with Sixth Form students at South Hampstead. The results I gathered for my study showed that there was a statistically significant negative correlation between self-esteem and Instagram usage.

In our questionnaire, 50% of Senior School students even stated that they want to use their phone less, so we decided to take action to help students – hence developing a family phone pledge. When creating the contract, we decided to focus on what we call the '4S's': Social, Study, Sleep and School. At South Hampstead we have strict phone rules: pupils in Year 11 and below are not allowed to use their phones at school from 8.30am to 4pm - and students must keep their phones locked in their locker during the day.

This contract is of course purely voluntary, just something we thought might help you if you want to set some ground rules as a family. The ideas are all suggested by South Hampstead Sixth Formers but supported by Digital Awareness UK. We hope it's of use. You can adapt it to suit your own family and take as many or as few pledges as you wish. We would love to hear how you get on, so please share any success stories with us by emailing: [senior@shhs.gdst.net](mailto:senior@shhs.gdst.net).

With best wishes

Laura (Deputy Head Girl)

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