

St. Michael's Primary School, Killean

Principal:
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Dear Parent/Guardian,

This week, the Minister for Education issued advice to schools regarding the use of mobile phones. This has reinforced our school policy that no child in St. Michael's has permission to bring a mobile phone onto school premises. If a child has a mobile on their person or in their bag, it will be confiscated.

Last year, the three schools in our parish organised a parents' information session with Internet Safety expert Wayne Denner. Our Primary 6 and 7 pupils also attended an Internet Safety workshop with Wayne. He highlighted some of the dangers your child may be exposed to if they are not supervised online.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you about some of the important information parents were given:

- It is strongly advised that any child under the age of 13 should **NOT** be accessing any chat interactive game or social media platform.
- Any multiplayer platform can lead to troubling interactions.
- Parental controls should be applied before allowing your child to access the internet or any app.

It is always a good idea to have open and honest communication with your children regarding technology. Talk to them about internet safety and be sure they know who to turn to if they encounter a situation that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Additionally, according to experts, the following moves could protect children online:

- Familiarise yourself with parental controls. It is much easier to remove them incrementally when your children get older.
- Disable any child chat functionality.
- Do not allow children to play online behind closed doors.

Being online can be safe when parents take the recommendations seriously. But, like all technology, it comes with risks, so it's best to start conversations about staying safe online as early as possible. Being online should always be in a shared family space where you can supervise their activity, use parental controls, and keep checking in regularly with your children to help ensure their safety.

When a parent ignores the advice and gives a child access to multiplayer platforms, especially ones that facilitate chat features between players, this often ends with a child becoming upset or exposed to potential bullying. The school **can not** intervene in cases of alleged cyber bullying as it happens outside of school. We strongly advise that you **do not** give your child access to these platforms until they are of the legal age to do so.

Yours faithfully,

Mr McAteer