



ST MARY'S STAR OF THE SEA MILTON
CATHOLIC PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL
Help One Another

30 July 2025

Technology Vigilance

Dear Parents/Caregivers

I congratulate and thank the many parents in our school community who work in the spirit of respect, compassion, and joy by putting proactive measures on devices and parental controls in place to ensure that their children are safe while online. We understand that technology has many benefits and acquiring skills to use devices is necessary for our children in their future. We also acknowledge the pressure that children may exert on parents to allow more access and freedom online. Recently, the Stage Two and Three teachers have become increasingly concerned about some students' unsupervised use of devices at home. The teachers have spoken to the Stage Two and Three students to explain that accessing social media and messaging sites without supervision puts themselves and their peers at risk. I urge you to work with us to exercise extreme vigilance to ensure all students remain safe and secure in a virtual environment.

Messaging

Please ensure that you are closely monitoring your child's messaging with other peers and that all interactions are friendly, appropriate, and respectful of family bed and meal times. Even though these interactions occur out of school hours, they can be regarded as bullying and harassment due to being conveyed in writing and over a telecommunication device. In addition, these concerns have the potential to spill over and negatively impact peer social relationships at school.

Social Media

Please also be aware that social media platforms, including **Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and TikTok, require all users to be at least 13 years old** (which will be increased to 16 years in 2026). Please be aware that many gaming sites have messaging options that are not immediately evident, which can make your child vulnerable to undesirable/ unknown internet users. Put simply, primary-aged children need social understanding and skills to cope in an online environment; many children will only develop these necessary skills once they are much older and can navigate this virtual world. Every parent has a responsibility to protect their child rather than assume they can trust their child online.

Research from child psychologists such as Michael Carr-Gregg states clearly that children aged 11-12 years are not equipped to use social media sites appropriately. At this time of the student's development, including hormonal changes due to puberty, they are already dealing with increased stress and anxiety. Inappropriate online activity can be detrimental and severely compromise children's mental health.

Movies

Recently, we have noted an increase in inappropriate behaviours from some students played out after watching movies that contain violent or sexualised content. This has a significant impact on the student and their peer group. Navigating movie choices for children relies heavily on the Classification Board's

rating system, which offers crucial guidance to parents and guardians. This system aims to align content with a child's developmental readiness, using categories like G (General), PG (Parental Guidance), M (Mature), MA 15+ (Mature Accompanied), and R 18+ (Restricted). While G-rated films are suitable for all ages, and PG-rated content is mild in impact but may require parental guidance for potentially confusing or upsetting themes, the M rating serves as an advisory for audiences 15 and over, acknowledging that younger children may struggle with its moderate impact. For MA 15+ films, legal restrictions are in place, requiring those under 15 to be accompanied by an adult, signifying stronger content that demands a mature understanding. Ultimately, by consulting these ratings and the accompanying consumer advice (which details elements like themes, violence, and language), parents can make informed decisions to ensure their child views movies that are appropriate for their emotional and cognitive development, fostering a safe and enriching media experience.

Our strong recommendations include the following:

1. **Take charge of your child's device if you have not done so already. Insist that when in use, the device is used in full view of an adult in the central part of your home. Set a clear expectation that devices are not present or attended to during meal times. This would include not allowing the device to be in your child's room at any time, particularly during the night.** A good habit to develop in families is to place devices in a container that remains in the parents' bedroom all night.
2. **Monitor and/or close down** your child's Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, or other social media accounts. If your child has one of these accounts, ensure their privacy settings are set to private. Without this, any person with access to these platforms are able to view and interact with your child at any time. Encourage children to contact friends face-to-face or through a phone call.
3. Restrict your child's **use of devices. Do not allow devices in bedrooms at any time, including TVs. Limit the time** your child is using devices. Sleep deprivation is rife amongst children aged 8 onwards.
4. Check your child's device on a very regular basis. **If the history has been deleted, your child is probably visiting sites they do not wish you to know about.** Check regularly which Apps have been downloaded and are being used. Sit with your child and have them show you what the App is intended to do.
5. **Most of all, open the lines of communication with your children, so they know they can come directly to you if they are concerned or need guidance. Reinforce that if students see anything that concerns them, or become aware of a peer that may be in a dangerous or vulnerable situation they should screenshot if possible, make an adult aware rather than discussing with peers. Contact the school if the matter involves other students.**

We thank you for your support, as we work in partnership with you as parents to ensure the happiness and safety of every child at St Mary's, therefore we ask you to discuss all aspects of this letter with your child. The school will continue to take any incidents involving the misuse of technology at home or talking about inappropriate content very seriously. The consequences for students involved in this form of harassment towards other students will be substantial and serious. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have any concerns.

Yours in partnership,



Laurinda Nelson - Principal