Digital Bulletin – iOS 12 Screen Time

If you own an iPhone, you may have updated to the most recent operating system, iOS 12. I wanted to write to you to tell you about a new feature of this update called 'Screen Time'. I am aware that this bulletin may come across as an advert for a particular brand of mobile phone; however, I cannot ignore that Apple have a large share of this particular market. Indeed, as I look around school, I see that many students have an iPhone and therefore hopefully this guide will be relevant.

As always, if there are any other specific areas that you would like advice or support, please email me at njl@reigategrammar.org

Screen Time

The Screen Time function allows owners to see how much time they have been using their phone either on that particular day, or over a seven-day period. The feature can be found in the 'Settings' menu. On my phone, I found that it had also installed itself as a widget. In my conversations with members of the Junior and Senior Digital Councils, the topic of screen time has frequently been raised. Some students have taken steps by installing external apps to monitor their usage, while others were completely unaware. The introduction of this as a fundamental feature of the phone makes it easier for students to monitor both how and when they use their phones. Screen Time also breaks down the amount of time spent on the phone into separate categories. These include: Productivity, Entertainment, Games and Social Media. This means that you have a clear understanding of not only how long you are using your phone, but for which purpose.

Downtime and App limits

Screen Time also allows owners to set a downtime, during which only selected apps can be used. This could be used to effectively switch the phone off at a set time so that owners can (for example) get a good night's sleep! It also has a function that can limit the amount of time spent on the phone. This can either be set across all apps, or specific categories.

Notifications and Pickups

You can also see how many notifications you receive and also how this is broken down across all of your different apps. At the time of writing, I can see that I have received 81 work emails today – a number that I would not have otherwise taken the time to count. As notifications represent the number of times your phone calls for your attention, this is very useful information. Also, the Pickup function shows how often you pick up the phone and also provides a graph of how this was spread out across the day.

What next?

The reason why I wanted to write about this in the same week that this update was released was to explore ways in which we can support children in using their phones and mobile devices responsibly. It also provides an opportunity for both your children and yourselves to monitor how and when the phone is being used. It may be that this is a good time to open a conversation about what reasonable usage might look like. Maybe questions might include:

- How much is a reasonable amount of time to spend on a phone?
- How much time should you spend on social media/games?
- When would be a reasonable time at night to disable apps?
- How many times do you receive a notification and which apps are the most active?
- Do you feel in control of your screen time? If not, how can we support you?

Feedback from students

You may think that no students would want to entertain any measure to limit screen time and in many cases, you may be correct. However, feedback from students have shown that they have sometimes opted for a voluntary digital detox for a period of time (e.g. near exams) or have already taken steps to monitor their own usage. Other students have said that with hindsight, they would suggest to younger students that they put their phones away and 'look up'.

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