



S V Pritt-Roberts M.Ed.
Deputy Head Academic
Email: vicky.pritt-roberts@ellesmere.com

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Dear Parents,

Important guidance on buying devices for your child.

As you will be keenly aware, keeping children safe online is a shared task, between school, home and the child. As the festive season approaches there is likely to be requests to Santa for smart technology and I thought it timely to share some information with you to help your decision making.

Pupils in Lower School and Middle School are not allowed mobile phones during the school day and if they have one it must be locked away until the end of the school day. Middle School pupils are allowed to access in house at lunch time, but if that is abused then that privilege will be denied. We do this to reduce the opportunity for pupils to be mesmerised by their phones, limit the time for them to engage in poor social media exchanges, and to enable them to engage in school life productively. We allow 6th Form to have their phones, unless it is clear they are not using them in a sensible way.

Many pupils will have laptops and/or tablet devices. All tablets can connect to the internet via wi-fi, but cellular models (which connect to the mobile phone network) also let you use a 4G or 5G mobile internet connection. These cellular connections let you surf the web and therefore access social media, over a mobile network while out and about, just like your smartphone. However, for your child, even those in 6th Form, when in school it is preferable they have a **wi-fi only device**. The reason for this is that when using it they are forced to go through the school wi-fi connection, which means they are protected as the school has a firewall with high security to protect young people from access to inappropriate sites. Mobile internet connections use the mobile phone (cellular) network, which has no firewall to filter out harmful sites or content.

It is important that your child does not install Virtual Private Network (VPN) software to try to circumvent our web filters which actively seek out devices with VPNs installed and subsequently blocks them.

Ellesmere College, Ellesmere, Shropshire SY12 9AB

Tel: 01691 622321 Fax: 01691 623286

www.ellesmere.com

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This information is particularly important if you are thinking of getting your child a tablet or a laptop for Christmas. We ask that you purchase **wi-fi only models**, so they have to connect to the schools wi-fi network, and the wi-fi in your home, both will have firewall and safety controls to keep your child safe.

To make life as easy as possible for students, we recommend a device that has a Microsoft Operating System such as Windows 10 or 11. The Windows Surface wi-fi only model is our recommended device and I strongly recommend you do not purchase devices that let your child access 4G or 5G mobile internet, which is open to the world and goes outside the firewall.

I take this opportunity to inform you that there is a wealth of resources available to parents around keeping your child safe online. We have provided links on our website where you can click on the area of interest to you and download the guidance, which includes how to set a family safety mode and restricted modes on the apps that you allow your child to have on their phone.

Go to the Ellesmere website, parent area, policies and click on safeguarding online. <https://www.ellesmere.com/the-schools/all/college-policy-documents/safeguarding-on-line-e-safety/>.

I hope this information proves helpful to you in keeping your child safe online.

My best wishes to you and your family for the festive season.

Regards,

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