Digital Citizenship – Mobile Technology

Report by Director – Education and Lifelong Learning

Education Sub-Committee

24 May 2023

1   **PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

1.1   **This report seeks approval of the first in a new series of guidance documents for schools under the theme of Digital Citizenship. This guidance focuses on supporting the safe use of mobile technology in schools.**

1.2   Mobile technology is an integral part of the lives of children and young people across Borders and Scotland, with many bringing their own mobile phone devices into school.

1.3   It is important that schools are empowered and confident in ensuring the safe and responsible use of all devices in school.

1.4   This guidance responds to the need for an overarching framework to achieve consistency in schools' approaches and decision making and provides a clear framework, while empowering schools and clusters to develop an approach which responds to their local context.

2   **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1   **I recommend that the Education Sub-Committee:-**

a) **Approves the implementation of the Responsible Use of Mobile Technology Guidance.**

b) **Agrees the expectation that each school will share plans for implementation in their own setting with key stakeholders.**

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   The Scottish Government recently released a guidance document on the use of mobile phone technology in schools, outlining best practice and recommendations for incorporating these devices into everyday classroom activities.

3.2   In response to this, guidance has been created to support schools and clusters to create their own policies and approaches to ensuring the safe and responsible use of all mobile technology in school.

3.3   This document will form the first document within the theme of Digital Citizenship which will also include Cyber Resilience, Internet Safety and curriculum areas such as technology and health and wellbeing.

3.4   This guidance recognises that children and young people need to learn about digital citizenship as part of developing the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence and the fundamental importance and impact of Inspire Learning is recognised throughout.

3.5   The guidance will be rolled out across all schools with appropriate support for the implementation.

3.6   All schools will be expected to share their plans to implement the guidance with pupils, parents and other key stakeholders.

3.7   Used responsibly, mobile devices such as Inspire iPads and mobile phones can enhance learning and teaching, communication and social experiences and can bring a sense of security to parents as their children enjoy more independent activities, such as walking to and from school unsupervised. Such devices can also be powerful tools when utilised by teachers to enhance learning and teaching.

3.8   Inspire Learning is transforming teaching and learning across the Borders for the benefit of all teachers, children and young people where Apple devices are given to all P4-S6 pupils and shared class sets of iPads for ELC to P3 children. The iPad is the default digital tool for learning within a classroom and thus reduces the need to use a personal mobile device though there may be some situations where this is appropriate.

3.9   All Inspire iPads use content filtering software at all times, from any location, in and outside of school, ensuring the safeguarding for all young people and children. All devices are enrolled in a Mobile Device Management system which allows SBC to set restrictions to ensure iPads work in accordance with the acceptable use policy. Importantly, it allows the Council to protect the data on the iPad, so in the case of the iPad being lost or stolen it can be locked, wiped, tracked and traced.

3.10   While the benefits of being able to stay safe and connected through the use of personal devices is strongly recognised, there are risks associated with children and young people bringing their own personal mobile phones into schools, both in terms of low-level disruption in classes and more serious misuse such as bullying and harassment of children and young people and staff. Such behaviour is unacceptable in any context.

3.11 Historically, 'acceptable use' policies have had a focus on managing and controlling online behaviour. More recently, there has been a move towards the promotion of positive relationships and behaviour in a digital context. This shift recognises the important role of educators in preparing young people to become 'digital citizens'. It takes into account the fact that young people have extensive access to the internet through mobile devices outwith the school.

3.12 For children and young people, the internet is a place, not a thing. It is a social space where they can hang out and meet friends. Like any place that children and young people go, there are benefits and risks. We would not expect children and young people to behave appropriately without guidance from adults in any other context.

3.13 Children and young people need to understand that unacceptable behaviour remains unacceptable whether it occurs in an online environment, the playground, the classroom or anywhere else. Expectations for responsible conduct remain consistent, regardless of the context, and any breach of expectations in relation to mobile technology should be treated in accordance with the school's behaviour policies. It is expected that staff will respond consistently to any irresponsible use of mobile technology and will explain to children why certain behaviours are unacceptable, and what the potential impact of such behaviours might be.

3.14 In line with this, policies on personal mobile phone technology must be rooted within existing positive relationships and behaviour policies, which will already set out how incidents will be dealt with.

3.15 Schools will be expected to set out expectations regarding any restrictions on personal mobile phone devices use within school grounds within the school day, at social events and on school outings. For example, it may be agreed that mobile phones should be switched off and out of sight during lesson times.

3.16 It is important that any policies or guidance articulate recognition that personal mobile devices provide a safety tool and should not be "demonised" or banned from school premised.

3.17 Consideration will be given to situations where mobile phones will be used by children and young people with particular needs, for example, a young carer who is worried about the health of their parents or where an individual learning plan is supported through access to a personal device.

3.18 Schools should have clearly-stated responsibility/liability for personal mobile phones in terms of loss, theft or breakage.

3.19 Agreed protocols to deal with any incidents of misuse of mobile technology should be integrated with each school's existing policies and approaches to managing relationships and behaviour and must not compromise for example individual learning plans or safety mitigations.

3.20 No mobile device (Inspire or personal) should be utilised inappropriately as a behaviour management tool.

3.21 Clear protocols on reporting of misuse within the school, and the support available in school for staff and for children and young people who are the subject of harassment using mobile phones must be communicated with young people, parents and staff.

3.22 It is important that school guidance and policies are shared with children and young people, parents and staff, for example in the School Handbook or school website.

3.23 Support to develop cluster and school guidance and policies will be provided following the rollout of the guidance. The full guidance is included at Appendix 1 to the report.

4   IMPLICATIONS

4.1 **Financial**
There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

4.2 **Risk and Mitigations**
These are outlined in the guidance document.

4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**
(a)   The Council has a statutory obligation to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic (age, disability, gender re-assignment, trans/transgender identity, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race groups, religion or belief, sex-gender identity, and sexual orientation) and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not. This involves tackling prejudice and building understanding. Additionally, where proposals are "strategic", the Fairer Scotland Duty requires us to show that we have actively considered how we can reduce socio-economic inequalities in the decisions that we make and to publish a short written assessment on how we have done this.

(b)   Section 1 has been completed and is included for reference at Appendix 2.

4.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

(a)   **Goal 3 -** Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

(b)   Support the following **National Policies:**

i.   Health and Wellbeing and Technologies curriculum areas in Curriculum for Excellence
ii.   Getting it Right for Every Child
iii.   Better relationships, better learning, better behaviour:
iv.   Included, engaged and involved part 2: a positive approach to managing school exclusions
v.   Enhancing Learning and Technology through Technology

(c)   **Local Policies**:
i.   Learning Teaching and Assessment Framework
ii.   Inclusion Framework
iii.   Inclusion Policy

4.5 **Climate Change**
No impact

4.6 **Rural Proofing**
No impact

4.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**
There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1   The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received will be reported at the Sub Education Committee Meeting.

Approved by

Lesley Munro   **Director – Education & Lifelong Learning**

Author(s)

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Background Papers: Digital Citizenship : Safe Use of Mobile Technology in Schools
Previous Minute Reference: Not applicable

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Catherine Thomson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA (Tel 01835 824000).