From iPads to Instagram: A guide to navigating the challenges and opportunities of technology with kids

By: Jonathan Adams, Head of Learning Technologies

I didn't write that title. That was done with the assistance of ChatGTP. So was the first draft of this article. Technology can be an amazing thing when used in the right way.

As technology becomes increasingly integrated into our daily lives, parents and teachers are faced with the challenge of navigating the opportunities and challenges that technology presents for children. While it can provide children with access to educational resources, entertainment, and social connection, it also presents potential risks such as cyberbullying, exposure to inappropriate content, and addiction.

To navigate these challenges and opportunities, there are several steps we (parents and staff) to ensure that children are using technology in a safe and beneficial way. It is important to establish clear guidelines and expectations for technology use. This can include setting limits on screen time, monitoring online activity, and discussing appropriate behaviour and safety precautions. There are plenty of applications to support families with managing screen time. These include Qustodio, Norton Family and Family Shield. It's important to note though that some of these can also limit the accessibility to support the teaching and learning of students while at school.

Having open conversations with your child about their online activity is another important step to ensure they are using technology safely. Discussing sites they visit or apps they use and negotiate what works for your family.

Listen to your child and reach an agreement about what is right for your family. Remember the time will come when they will access the internet outside the safety of home and you want them to be prepared for that.

We have all heard the term 'Digital Natives'. That generation are no longer students at Oxley College. In fact, many of the staff and parents here can be described as 'Digital Natives', these are also referred to as millennials or generation Y (born between 1982 and 1994). Most students at Oxley are now generation Alpha. Generation Alpha has been born at a time of falling fertility rates across much of the world, and experienced the global COVID-19 pandemic as young children.

Generation Alpha's lives has increasingly been dominated by electronic technology, social networks, and streaming services, with interest in traditional television concurrently falling. Changes in the use of technology in classrooms and other aspects of life have influenced how this generation has experienced early learning compared to previous generations. Research is only now looking at the impact of technology on this new generation. It is our job as parents, teachers and the Oxley College Community in general to support, balance and nurture our students in this rapidly changing world. It is certainly exciting times with some enormous benefits but a journey we must all take together and support one another.