



St. Martin's School
Newsletter for Skills
March 2020



Dear Parent / Carer

Welcome to our very first Newsletter focused on Skills: Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Competence. The purpose of the newsletter is to keep you up to date with developments of skills across the curriculum at St. Martin's School. I hope that this newsletter will bridge the gap between school and home learning. We also hope that this document strengthens the teacher-parent collaboration that plays a key role in students' achievement.

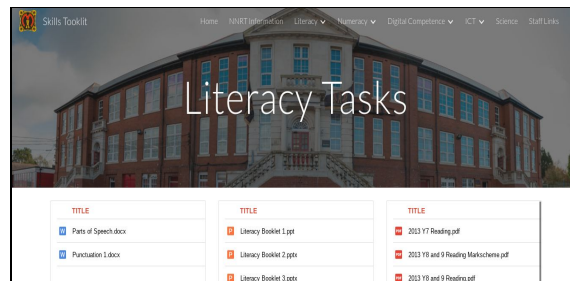
Kind regards,

Mr M Lewis
ESLT - Skills Development.



New Skills Toolkit

We have recently developed a skills toolkit for Key Stage 3 and 4 learners. The toolkit is linked to our school website (under the Teaching and Learning section) but can also be found by visiting the following link - bit.ly/stmartinsskills (students are required to sign in using their school google account to access). The website contains student tasks, help guides and videos to support home learning. We will continue to develop and review this as the year progresses.



National Reading and Numeracy Tests

If you view the skills toolkit, you will find copies of National Numeracy and Reading tests from previous years for reference along with parental information from Welsh Government. Please be advised that all tests will take place in English and Mathematics lessons. Reading tests will take place the first two weeks after half term.

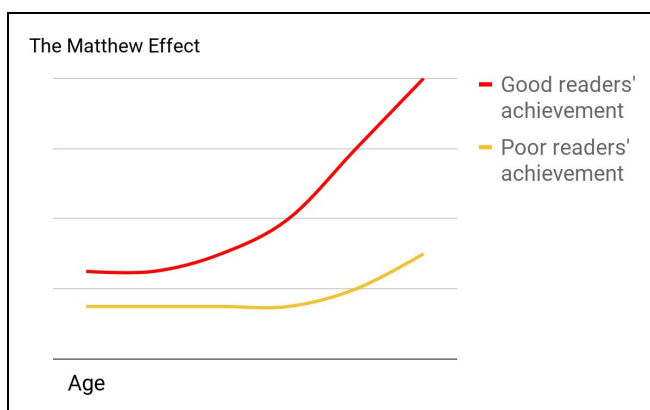
The current tests will follow a slightly different format online. We would also like to emphasise that these tests are designed to be a diagnostic tool to inform students of their strengths and weaknesses so that they can target key areas of their learning for the remainder of the year.

Raising Children Who Read

Regular reading has a wide range of benefits and we are keen for our students to be enthusiastic readers who love reading for pleasure. There's a term in education called 'The Matthew Effect'. (See graph illustration) The idea behind this is that good readers, who regularly read, develop their vocabulary, enjoy school and as a result achieve more over time. On the flip side, students who do not read and develop their vocabulary are likely to disengage with school, which then negatively repercussions on their grades. Students who read for 20 minutes a day are exposed to 1,800,000 words a year, compared to 8,000 words for those who read for just 1 minute.

Whilst we appreciate that it is often difficult to encourage some young people to put down the smart phone and read - may we offer a few suggestions that may help...

- Books based on a true story
- Books linked to a recent trip, activity or interest
- Books related to a movie or TV show
- Biographies
- Newspaper articles / Topical Magazines
- Online Blogs
- Poetry / songbooks
- Visit to a library or bookshop
- Gifting a book
- Role modelling good reading
- Look at what books influential figures endorse





Improving Oracy with Flipgrid

In the autumn term, we launched Flip Grid to all faculties to use within their lessons. In essence, Flip Grid is a video equivalent to google classroom. It develops students' oracy skills and allows them to develop confidence by letting them playback and review their recordings/presentations. Even though this is in its infancy here at St. Martin's - it has already been used in a number of engaging lessons; more notably in Mrs Gibbard's history lesson with Year 10 where learners used the tool to discuss what Labour's win meant for Britain in 1945!



Apps for Numeracy

As you may be aware, the Mathematics Faculty recently introduced Hegarty Maths to students. This award winning platform is used by schools across the world - and we are excited to see the difference it will make to our students' learning too! We would like to emphasise the importance of using www.hegartymaths.com as often as possible at home, in order for it to have maximum impact! If any student is unaware of their details to log in, please ask your maths teacher.



The second app that we would like to make parents / carers aware of is PiXL Times Tables. Some students may already be aware of this app from our pilot last year. We feel that this app / website is a fun way to ensure students retain their times tables, which are the fundamentals to good numeracy! This will be relaunched in March 2020, where students will revisit this during registration once a fortnight but, again, students will be encouraged to use it whenever and whenever they can. Students will be given the login credentials during the first session with their tutor.

<https://timestable.pixl.org.uk/Timestables.html>



Numeracy Newspaper

We are always keen to strengthen our learners' reasoning and problem solving skills. Reasoning is an all round important thinking / numeracy skill. Thinkers need to be able to support conclusions with structured reasons and evidence, make informed, reasoned decisions and make valid inferences.

One website leading the way to develop these skills is The Daily Rigour. This is a free online numeracy newspaper that contains weekly thought provoking problems, based on current affairs and relevant news stories. The website also includes answers videos for students to self assess afterwards! Our form tutors will also be making the most of this resource from time to time too. As this is available online, that means this resource is accessible to families at home too.

<https://www.cdmasterworks.co.uk/the-daily-rigour/>





Talking Numeracy at Home

While we continually look for opportunities within our curriculum to expose students to numeracy in a number of authentic contexts, we would like to encourage students to look for numeracy outside of school too.

Simple questions that could strengthen this thinking could include...

1. Can you estimate the cost of items a, b and c on the receipt?
2. Roughly, what would a, b and c cost together?
3. What percentage of the total cost is item a?
4. What is the volume of the contents of item a?

Keep your eyes peeled - numeracy is all around you and you'll find it a lot easier than you first realise to get children thinking thinking, talking all things numeracy!



Sixth Form Numeracy Mentors

At St. Martin's School, we believe in working together in a number of ways to support achievement for everyone. More recently, 6 of our Year 12 mathematicians have volunteered to support some of our Year 11 students. They will be mentoring these students twice a week, offering support with numeracy, revision techniques and study timetables. Thank you to Mali, Max, Ram, George and Freya for spending your time to support these students.

Digital Leaders Update

We are pleased to see this year we have recruited some brand new digital leaders in Year 9. Meetings take place every Wednesday in room 33 after school and so far, they have contributed to the school's digital vision in a number of ways -

- Trialled and piloted software before it is used in the classroom
- Chosen app of the month for whole school focus
- Attended all staff 'teach meet' to launch Flipgrid
- Presented to student teachers and new staff about ICT in school
- Received Ffrind i Mi training sessions with Sixth Form
- Supported staff with ICT queries 1 to 1

Our digital leaders have also been heavily involved in our new 'App of the Month' initiative. So far we have focused on Google Sites, Flipgrid and Tour Creator. Our digital leadership team trial and test a number of apps before deciding on the app they want to launch to the whole school.

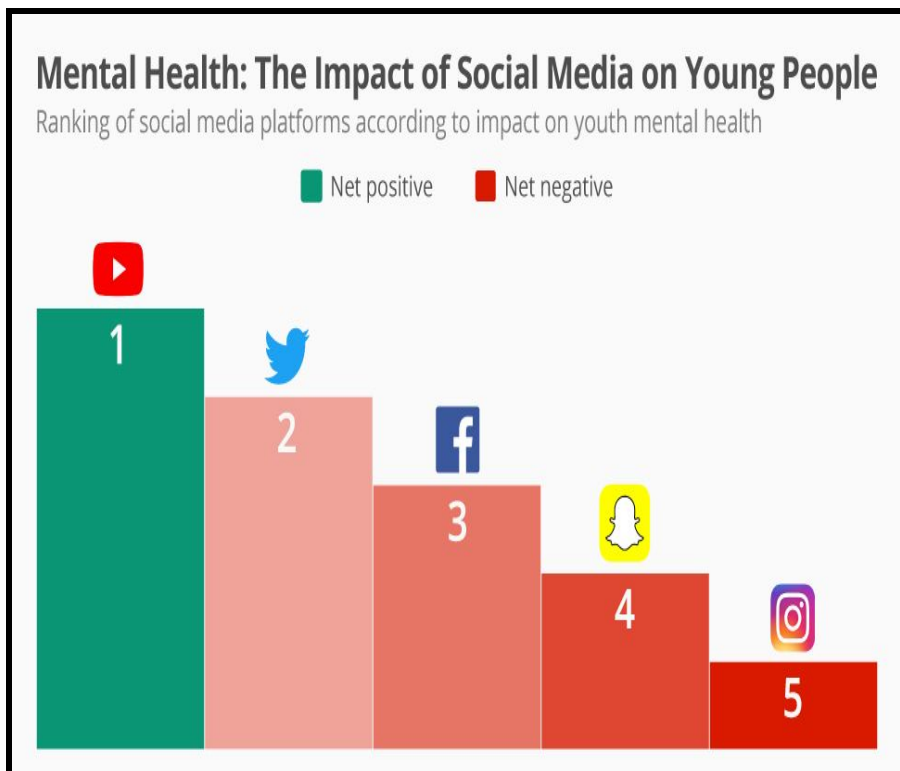
For the next few projects students will be promoting positive online citizenship, launching future apps and making training tutorials for staff. If you too would like to be part of this hardworking, dedicated team who are crucial to the school's digital development across the school - please come along to one of our meetings. Everyone is welcome!



Digital Detox Day

This year for my annual e-safety assembly and safer internet day, I decided to take a slightly different approach. While students are constantly reminded in lessons about the online dangers, we feel it is equally important for students to be aware of the impact it has on their wellbeing. My assembly this year gave students the opportunity to reflect on how their online version of themselves differs from the offline version, consider how being online makes them feel and whether or not they are in control of their technology usage.

Following this, we then used 'Safer Internet Day' on 11th February as a day to encourage students to have a digital detox, so they could see just how reliant they are on technology, their mobile phones and social media.. A survey was then sent to students the following day to reflect on their experience.



- 60% of students said that they wake up and/or fall asleep on their mobile phones
- 54% agreed that less technology at night would improve sleep
- 50% said they wouldn't let a younger brother or sister use technology as much as they do
- 40% said that technology has had an impact on their social skills (positive and negative)

Our students also provided a number of comments as part of the survey, expressing how technology has had an impact on their lives..

- Gives confidence to make friends
- Sometimes I spend too long on my phone and lose the ability to concentrate
- I've become more sociable because of technology
- Can cause people to feel anxious or upset
- It taught me how much I depend on technology
- I realised that I do not need my phone for everything

This experiment was in no way designed to discourage students from using technology, but to highlight both the negative and positive influence that it can have. As we clearly emphasised as part of this assembly - it is important to have a balance, to be in control of your usage and of course, to be a good digital citizen.



Skills Enrichment Project

You may have seen in our main school newsletter, in February, we provided an after school skills enrichment project that was open to all students in Year 7 and 8 for just 3 sessions. Over 30 students attended this project over the course of two weeks.

The aim of the first session was for students to explore the range of technology on offer: VR, cyber security, 3D printing, animation, green screen, eco green house. We were able to access this exciting equipment thanks to Go Connect in collaboration with Educalis, Have a Go Wales, National Digital Exploitation Centre. The second session, students put themselves into groups and were asked to 'change the world' using one or more of the kits on offer. To conclude the project - students presented their ideas to parents and businesses before receiving feedback from industry experts from Welsh ICE.

At the start and end of the project we asked students to complete a skills audit, to allow us to see if the project improved their application of skills. It is pleasing to see that students' skills scored higher at the end of the project, when compared to the start score.

Students that wouldn't normally feel confident at public speaking or working with other students in a different year group benefited from this experience. They felt less nervous about making mistakes too! Parents do not always get to see their children present in this context, so it was wonderful to provide this opportunity for them to see their pitches in action. It was equally rewarding seeing students organically developing their ideas using literacy, numeracy and digital competence in an authentic way.

What also makes it worthwhile, is the comments and tweets from parents. We are grateful for your feedback and are glad that your children enjoyed this project. It was lovely to see the children teach the adults how to use the technology too! Thank you for your continued support.

Replying to [@StMartinsInfo](#) [@GoConnectWales](#) and 2 others

Great to see lots of organisations come together to make this happen! And the student presentations were inspiring. More of the same please 🙌

Replying to [@StMartinsInfo](#) and [@WelshICECymraeg](#)

What confident students you are producing [@StMartinsInfo](#) ..it's so important for our young people to develop their skills in this way & have collaboration with industry contacts. Well done to all involved
[#ideasofthefuture](#) [#confidentlearners](#) [#tech](#)



GoConnect [@GoConnectWales](#) · Feb 13

Really proud to have helped get this off the ground. Thanks [@StMartinsInfo](#) and [@EducalisLtd](#) for all your hard work in making this happen. Watch this space for future projects!

