Technology: Education’s Friend or Foe?

“One in three [teenagers] admitted trying to hide what they were looking at if a parent entered the room,” quoted The Telegraph. This raises the question: Is technology really being used in the right way?

Technology has now become more important in teenagers’ lives today with them spending on average thirty one hours a week online on social networking sites or game rooms. Although three hours of this is used researching important information for homework or coursework, does this make technology an advantage for teenagers’ education?

Despite the World Wide Web being a fantastic free tool available to aid people’s education, the negative effects could outweigh the advantages. There are over 800 million users on Facebook today. This includes teenagers going through an important time in their lives working towards GCSEs and similar. “I check my Facebook on my mobile before I start my homework or coursework but I usually find myself on there for hours, so it’s very distracting,” says Naomi aged 14.

As well as Social Networking being very distracting to teenagers, it is also proven that it has effects on the quality of their written English. “It doesn’t affect every teenager’s lives; however I’m constantly reminding pupils to write in standard English. A lot of them don’t even realise they are using “slang” words as they are so used to it,” states Miss Jill Walkington, English Teacher at Ricards Lodge High School. On the other hand, Fozia, 14, argues: “A lot of my friends shorten their words and I also do the same: it saves time and hopefully means I won’t have to pay for more than one text. However, in my school work I don’t carry it through, and I’m sure there are many other students who don’t either, even if they do use slang in their online/technology chats!”

Teenagers use the internet everyday to help them with their homework and could potentially help them cheat. This is as easy as a right click of the mouse, copy and paste onto their work: this is called Plagiarism. If they continue to do this during their high school years it will come as a shock when they go to University and realise that plagiarism could get their work disqualified from entering the exam.

This leads back to the question: is technology used in the right way? In many cases the answer is probably yes, as it’s not only used for people’s home lives, it is also used at school with the Interactive Whiteboards which are widely used all over the UK. These allow school pupils to learn more effectively with their teachers and peers. Yet, the disadvantages could definitely harm the education of young people. The majority of teenagers probably cut down their words into slang to just save time and get distracted even in the classroom by phones or social networking. This could then be carried out in their school work and could potentially bring their grades down, along with increased plagiarism.

So, is technology education’s friend or foe? It all depends on how and when it is used.

Written By Naomi (14) Elle Rhian (14) and Rachel (15)