

Seymour College to compel Years 3-7 students to install app allowing parents to restrict after school use

Tim Williams, The Advertiser

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Parents of young students at an Adelaide girls' school will have to join a system that allows them to control their daughters' social media and other internet use outside school hours.

In Term 2, Seymour College will introduce Australian company Family Zone's cyber-safety system. The college will take charge through the school day, and parents after hours, through app technology.

The school says it will reduce opportunity for bullying.

It will be compulsory for Years 3-7 students to have the app installed on any tablet or laptop girls use at school, to allow parents to restrict after school screen time, block sites and monitor sites visited.

It will be optional for Years 8-12. The system can extend to cover families' personal devices, including mobile phones, if they wish. There is no charge outside of school fees, and parents will choose the level of control they feel is appropriate.



PROTECTED: Seymour College students Milly, Bonnie and Hannah, all 15, get to work on their laptops. Picture: MATT LOXTON
They might block social media on weeknights but allow it on weekends.

Deputy principal Dan Walker said all the feedback he had received was positive. He anticipated only a “very small percentage” of parents to have privacy concerns, and they could choose not to apply any restrictions out of school hours. He expected a strong take-up by parents of Years 8 and 9 girls. During the school day from 8.30am-3.30pm, Seymour will use the technology to bar social media on students’ tablets and laptops, across all year levels. Even if students use their own 4G data, instead of the school Wi-Fi network, they will have no luck. “The ability to keep students safe regardless of the device they are using or the source of the internet they are connected to is one of the main differences that Family Zone offers,” principal Kevin Tutt said.

Years 10-12 girls will still be allowed to access their mobile phones in break times and, if their parents allow, use social media. Younger girls already have to have phones stored in lockers all day.

In class, teachers will be able to narrow students’ access to as little as a single website to ensure they are not distracted by irrelevant browsing. And they will be able to see which site or app a student has open.

There will be an alert if a student tries to uninstall the system from a device.

Pedare Christian College is also rolling out the system.

Family Zone education director Jon Chivers said: “It’s about being able to guide the girls about what you should and shouldn’t be using (devices) for.”

The Education Department said public schools each decided on any social media restrictions.