



THA/ZMOS

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Dear Parent/Carer

Online Safety

The internet is a brilliant place to connect with others, to be creative and to discover new things. There are many things we can do to ensure that all young people are using the internet and technology safely, responsibly and positively. Especially with all that is currently happening, students are expected to complete work set by their teachers online and therefore, we need to remain extra vigilant with their use of the internet.

An emerging national concern is the inappropriate use of the internet by students. This problem has the potential to be harmful, and we ask your support in assisting us with this challenge.

We would like to share some useful information to support you to monitor your child online. It is important that you are keeping the dialogue with your child open. Here are some conversation starter ideas:

1. Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.
2. Ask them about how they stay safe online. What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?
3. Ask them if they know where to go for help, where to find the safety advice, privacy settings and how to report or block on the services they use. More information on reporting websites can be found on www.childnet.com/resources/how-to-make-a-report
4. Encourage them to help. Perhaps they can show you how to do something better online or they might have a friend who would benefit from their help and support.

To have certain apps, your child needs to be at least 13 years old. With the speed at which the internet is changing, it is very difficult to keep up to date with all the changes. We understand that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the ways our students are using new and ever changing technologies. Students are immersed in a society that has become dependent on powerful computers, including smart phones, iPads, interactive online games and virtual communities. There is some excellent advice available on the parent's info website (<http://parentinfo.org/articles/apps-and-social-media/all>).

What are Parental Controls?

Parental Controls are software and tools, which you can install on phones or tablets, games consoles or laptops – and even your home broadband. You can also use them to help you block or filter the content your child sees when searching online.

Parental Controls are also available to help you:

- plan what time of day your child can go online and how long for
- stop them from downloading apps they're too young for
- manage the content that different members of the family can see.

Whatever your child is doing online, there are ways that you can help keep them safe. Advice on setting up parental controls can be found on the NSPCC website (<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/>).

There are many aspects to keep safe online, these include:

- Cyber bullying
- The digital footprint (think before you post)
- Relationships and grooming
- Sexting
- Radicalisation

The digital footprint is all the information left behind as you use the Internet. Comments on social media, calls, app use and email records - all this is part of your online history and can potentially be seen by other people or tracked in a database. This footprint can be searched for and shared by people we know and people we don't know.

Grooming is a process used to prepare a child for sexual abuse. An offender's aim when grooming will be to gain access to a child and build a relationship with that child. Online, it is easier for an offender to lie and gain one-to-one contact with a child, for example, through a social networking or gaming site. They can share images or videos relating to their claimed common interests and build a 'relationship' away from any adult supervision.

Sexting is the act of sending or receiving sexually explicit content such as text, video or an image. Sometimes students are not aware of the legal implications when sharing images. *"Pupils should learn that it is both a gross violation and a very serious offence to take or share sexual images of another person without their consent. Depending on the circumstances, sharing such images can be an offence under various different pieces of legislation... Sharing sexual images without consent is a form of sexual assault – and if the victim is under 18, it could also be classed as sharing images of child sexual abuse".* More information in sexting can be found on <http://www.childline.org.uk/explore/onlinesafety/pages/sexting.aspx>

All occurrences and reported incidents of misuse of social media sites happen at home, after school hours when children have access to their mobile phones and other devices. With this in mind, and in response to concerned parents who have asked for advice regarding internet safety, we feel it important to point out to parents the risks of unregulated use of such sites, so you can make informed decisions as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not and when and how to monitor their use, particularly at night time. We strongly advise a device free bedroom policy after bedtime to allow for uninterrupted sleep and rest.

Radicalisation is when someone adopts radical views, often after being influenced by someone they have met or being exposed to propaganda. Some young people going through adolescence are vulnerable to being radicalised as they deal with issues like belonging and faith. From a recent national survey of 11-24 year olds, conducted by the National Counter Terrorism Policing HQ, shows that many young people obtain their information from Google and social media sites including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Terrorist organisations also use social media to identify, influence and radicalise people. Vulnerable people can be exposed to extremist materials and radicalised by extremist views. There is some very useful information on radicalisation that can be found on www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/why-doing-more-protect-children-radicalisation and on www.educateagainsthate.com

There are many websites available to support parents to ensure that their child is safe online. These include:

- www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/
- www.thinkyouknow.co.uk/
- www.childnet.com/resources/
- www.gdst.net/parents/live-my-digital
- www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/
- www.net-aware.org.uk
- www.getsafeonline.org
- www.educateagainsthate.com/parents

We have seen an increase in negative student behaviour as a result of messages written using electronic technology, posted to popular social networking websites. Many sites contain instant messaging components that allow students to chat with other students and to post statements that ordinarily would not be said in a face-to-face conversation. Realistically, we cannot ban the use of the internet as it has many benefits, but it is essential to educate and monitor students when they are online or using electronic devices. Education around safe internet use is essential. There is an E-safety Section on the school website, which contains more useful information including the digital parenting magazine. Such information can be found on the School website.

Many thanks for your support.

Yours faithfully



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