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Headteacher: Mr Peter Allen

3rd February 2017

Dear Parents,

A letter was sent home at the end of last term regarding the use of social media and online safety. We know that it is mainly the older children in school who use social media, but online safety is relevant for all ages. For many using social media it appears to be causing them increased anxiety and upset with some reporting obsessive behaviours relating to having to look at their phone/tablet to keep checking on their apps in case they miss something. Further information has now become available which we would like to share with you because both as a school and as parents we have a key role in helping all our children to be safe online.

We are aware that some of our children are using the app **Musical.ly** outside of school. Musical.ly is a free social media music app where users can watch user generated lip sync video, and create video themselves lip-syncing or dancing to music available on the app. Concerns relating to this app in terms of safeguarding are well-known. These relate to content (explicit materials), contact (children being groomed online through the app) and links within the app which lead to exposure to very explicit materials/sites. (See link below and other news stories relating to the use of this app).

The app is designed for children aged **13+** but the app's own terms and conditions state that users must affirm that they are **18+** which gives some indication of the risks in using it for younger children.

If your child is using the app, please check the following:
- What are they posting?
- Who are they communicating with?
- What are they accessing through the app?

https://thecybersafetylady.com.au/2016/03/musical-ly-not-for-kids/

There is also some information about **Minecraft**. A number of our pupils play Minecraft regularly and although it can be an amazing learning tool a recent news item has highlighted the dangers that some pupils may face. The risks associated with unmoderated use of online games remains. There have been two stories published in the news recently about children being groomed online through Minecraft.

Paedophile groomed boys online through Minecraft
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-38691882

Minecraft: Grooming dangers for children gaming online
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-38284216

For help and advice please visit the following website which has a wealth of information on how to support and protect your child when using Minecraft.
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/minecraft-a-parents-guide/

We have also been made aware of children using **Instagram** and it causing some distress with groups of children posting videos. The minimum age for using Instagram is **13** years old and any children at this school are therefore too young to be using the app.

Problems are being caused through the way it is making some children feel (very few positives, mainly negatives including anxiety) but they often keep using the app as they worry about being left out. It is important that all children feel that they can take control and have the confidence to be able to stop using the app if it is upsetting them.

We work hard at school to try to keep our children safe online. This includes trying to protect their well-being and reduce anxiety. We are not able to control what they do outside of school but are increasingly concerned about the impact that the use of the internet is having on many of our children. Please speak with your child and discuss this with them and help them if they are experiencing problems relating to using social media on their phones/tablets/computers. Further advice is available by clicking the 'e-safety' link on our website.

Please find below two useful documents, one about Minecraft and the other about social media age restrictions. If you have any concerns with regards to e-safety please do contact the school and we will be happy to discuss and advise.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Peter Allen
Headteacher

PLAYING MINECRAFT SAFELY

Childen love playing Minecraft. It encourages creativity and helps to build team skills. However, it's not without its risks. Immerse yourself in the world of Minecraft so you can talk to your child about playing safely.

Single is safest

Single player
No one can join your child's game or contact them in Minecraft chat.

Multiplayer
- Join any game or server, public or private
- See, chat and interact with others, whether friends or strangers
- Search for family-friendly servers online. Moderated by parents they have rules on language / behaviour

PLAYING WITH STRANGERS

VIOLENT CONTENT

Play in peace

- Creative mode: no monsters or death, just fun
- Adventure mode: play with others, fight monsters, minimal grief
- Survival mode: collect resources, battle monsters, manage hunger and try to survive

BULLIES

Know the enemy

- A Griefer is any player who ruins your child's experience.
- Chat to your child about settings that limit them like 'Whitelisting'
- Report to the server admin anyone who chats abusively in Minecraft chat.

Anonymity is best

- Use a nickname not a real name when playing
- Avoid using birth year in nickname
- Don't reveal age, school or address in Minecraft chat

PRIVACY

BAD LANGUAGE

Child friendly videos

Search for them online if you're worried that your child is watching Minecraft YouTube videos with bad language.

nspcc.org.uk/minecraft

SOCIAL MEDIA AGE RESTRICTIONS

13
facebook, instagram, tumblr, Flipboard, Pinterest, reddit

WITH PARENTAL CONSENT — 13
YouTube, Snapchat, kik, G+, Spotify

14
LinkedIn

WITH PARENTAL CONSENT — 15
PANDORA

16
WhatsApp

WITH PARENTAL CONSENT
skype

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flickr, Vine, Twitter

Information current as of November 10th, 2015.
Read terms and conditions before signing up for these services.