September 27th 2016

Supporting young people to use the internet safely

As parents and carers it is our responsibility to teach young people a variety of things to ensure that they are equipped to face today's challenges. We need to equip them with the strategies to deal with strangers and how to engage with other young people and adults appropriately in a variety of different settings.

When our young people go out we want to know where they are going and that they will be safe. We satisfy ourselves that they will have the knowledge and the skills to deal with any uncertain situations and will conduct themselves responsibly.

In the same way using the internet safely requires similar skills. It is important that parents, carers and young people are mindful of the dangers of the internet and are equipped to use it safely. They should be aware of the range of inappropriate sites and easily accessible material. These sites and perpetrators will prey on young people's naiveties and possible vulnerabilities and can put them at risk of harm.

There are however, a few simple steps which parents can take to help their young people use the internet safely.

Some simple ways to keep young people safe online

- Get to know your son/daughter's online habits. Young people are inquisitive. They will look to explore the internet as much as they do the real world. Knowing the sites they go to, the people they meet there and what they do will help to keep them safe.

- Stay alert to any sudden changes in mood or appearance, or to any major change in habits or to increased secretiveness which may indicate that something is wrong.

- Keep lines of communication open - tell your son/daughter that they can always talk to you or another trusted adult.

- The more that you know about the internet, the better able you are to help your son/daughter navigate without coming to any harm.

- Install internet filtering software showing a Child Safety Online Kitemark on your computer. Filtering products with a Kitemark have been independently tested to provide a simple and effective means of support to parents, helping to ensure that a young person's online experience is a safe one. The Kitemark scheme is sponsored by the Home Office and Ofcom.

(continued overleaf)

Internet Safety

- Help your son/daughter to understand that they should never give out personal details to online friends they do not know offline.

- Explain to your son/daughter what information about them is personal: i.e. email address, mobile number, school name, sports club, arrangements for meeting up with friends and any pictures or videos of themselves, their family or friends. Small pieces of information can easily be pieced together to form a comprehensive insight in to their lives and daily activities.

- Make your son/daughter aware that they need to think carefully about the information and pictures they post on their profiles. Inform them that once published online, anyone can change or share these images of them.

- It can be easy to forget that the internet is not a private space, and as result sometimes young people engage in risky behaviour online. Advise your son/daughter not to post any pictures, videos or information on their profiles, or in chat rooms, that they would not want a parent or carer to see.

- If your son/daughter receives spam or junk email and texts, remind them never to believe their contents, reply to them or use them.

- It's not a good idea for them to open files that are from people they don't know. They won't know what they contain—it could be a virus, or worse - an inappropriate image or film.

- Help your son/daughter to understand that some people lie online and that therefore it's better to keep online mates online. They should never meet up with any strangers without an adult they trust.

- Always keep communication open for a young person to know that it's never too late to tell someone if something makes them feel uncomfortable.

The above information is taken from the thinkuknow website (www.thinkuknow.co.uk) which has been set up specifically to provide information and advice to parents and young people about how to use the internet safely. Further information is also available at www.**ceop**.gov.uk/ (link on school website)

If you need further, specific advice please contact Mrs Ruston, Head of Student Support or a member of the Year group team.