22nd March 2016

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: Internet Safety

We take the security of your children on the internet extremely seriously; it is very important that we work together to ensure your child's safety. Whilst use of the internet and social networking sites is second nature to young people, they can often be swept along with what their peers are doing and lose awareness of the many dangers they are facing.

In the academy, the internet access is restricted, and known social networking sites are blocked. However, with most of the internet use of students being at home, it is important that parents and guardians understand the potential dangers and what can be done to avoid them. We do, of course, regularly talk to students about internet safety, but it is important that this message is reinforced at home and that you regularly talk to your child about their use of the internet.

The following is guidance from CEOP (the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre):

- Be involved in your child's online life. For many of today's young people there is no line between the online and offline worlds. Young people use the internet to socialise and grow, and just as you guide and support them offline, you should be there for them online too. Talk to them about what they're doing, if they know you understand they are more likely to approach you if they need support.

- Help your child to understand that posting or sharing inappropriate images of underage children (often people they know, or their friends) is a crime. What we do on-line can have severe consequences in 'real life'.

- Watch 'Thinkuknow' films to learn more. The 'Thinkuknow' programme has films and advice for children from five all the way to sixteen. Your child will have seen these at school, but they can also be a good tool for you to find out more about what young people do online and some of the potential risks.

- Keep up-to-date with your child's development online. Be inquisitive and interested in the new gadgets and sites that your child is using. It's important that as your child learns more, so do you.

- Set boundaries in the online world just as you would in the real world. Think about what they might see, what they share, who they talk to and how long they spend online. It is important to continue to discuss boundaries so that they evolve as your child's use of technology does.

- Know what connects to the internet and how. Nowadays even the TV connects to the internet. Your child will use all sorts of devices and gadgets; make sure you are aware of which ones can connect to the internet, such as their phone or games console. Also, find out how they are accessing the internet – is it your connection or a neighbour's Wifi? This will affect whether your safety settings are being applied.

- Consider the use of parental controls on devices that link to the internet, such as the TV, laptops, computers, games consoles and mobile phones. Parental controls are not just about locking and blocking, they are a tool to help you set appropriate boundaries as your child grows and develops. They are not the answer to your child's online safety, but they are a good start and are not as difficult to install as you might think. Service providers are working hard to make them simple, effective and user friendly.

- Emphasise that not everyone is who they say they are. Make sure your child knows never to meet up with someone they only know online. People might not always be who they say they are. Make sure your child understands that they should never meet up with anyone they only know online without taking a trusted adult with them.

- Know what to do if something goes wrong. Just as in the offline world, you want to help your child when they need it. Therefore, it is important to know when and how to report any problem.

With the Easter break approaching your child may spend more time on-line. If you have any concerns or queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours Faithfully,

Ms Cardnell

Vice Principal – Engagement