



12th December 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

RE: Online safety

Online safety is an important part of keeping children safe at The Community College Whitstable. Online safety is taught to all pupils and our curriculum empowers pupils to understand and be aware of how they can stay safe and behave appropriately online. However we can only be successful in keeping children safe online if we work with you.

Your help is needed to talk to your children about how they can keep themselves safe and behave appropriately online. It is important that we are all vigilant when children are using the internet and act to ensure they are protected from people who may pose a risk to them. Children can accidentally or deliberately be exposed to illegal, unwanted or unpleasant content, comments or activity online and there are steps you can take at home to minimise this risk.

What can parents/carers do to help children keep safe online? Follow the "Gold"en Rules

Ground Rules

Discuss together as a family how the internet will be used in your house. Consider what information should be kept private (such as personal information, photos in school uniform etc.) and decide rules for making and meeting online friends. Ensure your children know the risks of accepting friends' requests from strangers online and make sure you know what your child is doing online much like you would offline.

Discuss using strong passwords with your child so they understand how they can protect their online accounts- talk about keeping passwords safe, e.g. not sharing them with anyone or use the same password for several accounts. If your child's account is "hacked" or compromised then make sure they change their password and report any concerns or suspicious activity. For more advice on using strong passwords visit: <http://tinyurl.com/Getsafeonlinepassword>

Consider locating your child's computers and laptops in a family area but be aware that children access the internet on mobile phones, games consoles and tablets so cannot always be supervised. Be especially aware of setting rules relating to your child's use of webcams and any applications or devices which allow voice or video chat. Childnet have useful information for young people about using webcams safely: www.childnet.com/young-people/secondary/hot-topics/video-chat-and-webcams

Online safety

Install antivirus software, secure your internet connection and use parental control functions for computers, mobile phones and games consoles to block unsuitable content or contact from unknown people. Research different parental control software and tools available for your home and select the tools which are most suitable to you, your child and the technology in your home. Visit sites like www.internetmatters.org, www.getsafeonline.org and www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/a-parents-guide for safety information and advice about parental controls on consoles and devices and how to report concerns.

Make sure you read any parental guidance and safety recommendations (including age requirements – most popular social networking sites and apps are only for users aged 13+, 16+ or 18+) for any apps or websites before allowing your child to use them - visit www.net-aware.org.uk
Always remember that parental control tools are not always 100% effective and sometimes unsuitable content can get past them, so do not rely on them alone to protect your child.

Listen

Take an active interest in your child's life online and talk openly with them about the things they do. Talk to your child and ask them to show or even teach you how they use the internet, learn which websites or



tools they like to use and why. Learning together with your child can often open opportunities to discuss safe behaviour online.

To start a conversation with your child you could tell them that you understand that some young people share images and videos online and that you are interested to know what they think about it and how they think they can keep themselves safe.

Dialogue – keep talking

Ensure that your child knows that once a picture, video or comment is sent or posted online, then it can be very difficult to remove as other people can forward it and share it with others, without them even knowing. www.childnet.com and www.thinkuknow.co.uk have some really useful tips and ideas for parents/carers about starting conversations about online safety. Always ensure your child knows how to report and block people online who may send nasty or inappropriate messages or content. Encourage your child not to retaliate or reply to cyberbullying and to keep any evidence. Make sure your child knows it is important that they tell an adult they trust if anything happens online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable.

Remember, the internet is an essential part of young people's lives and provides them with tremendous opportunities. The vast majority use it without coming to any harm so it is essential to be realistic: banning the internet or websites often will not work and it can make a child feel less able to report a problem or concern, so education around safe use is essential.

Websites to visit for more information:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk – Visit the "Parent/Carer" section and use the "Click CEOP" button to seek advice and report online abuse.

www.childnet.com – Visit the 'Know It All' section for an interactive guide about online safety.

www.getsafeonline.org – Free up-to-date security advice including using complex passwords and managing hacked accounts.

www.internetmatters.org – Information from the four largest internet service providers (BT, Sky, Talk Talk and Virgin).

www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety – NSPCC's 'Share Aware' campaign provides information for parents about popular social media sites, apps and games.

www.saferinternet.org.uk – Parent guides to safety tools on popular devices and signposts report mechanisms for some websites.

www.kent.police.uk/internetsafety – Guidance from Kent Police.

Optional

If you are worried that your child is at risk of harm or a criminal offence has been committed, you can report your concerns to the Police or Children's Social Care. Please do not notify suspicious profiles of your actions, as this could enable them to delete material which might be required for any Police investigations. You can contact Kent Police via 101 or 999 if there is immediate risk, or report online abuse to CEOP by visiting www.ceop.police.uk and using the "Click CEOP" reporting button. You can also contact Kent Children's Social Services on 03000 41 11 11, or email social.services@kent.gov.uk.

The school Designated Safeguarding Leads (Mr Chaplin and Miss Murphy) and I are available to discuss any help you may need or concerns that you may have.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A M Gibson
Headteacher