Ref:O/LD/On-linesafety/jsn   28th May 2021

Dear Parents / Carers,

I am writing to share with you the content of on-line safety assemblies that have been delivered to all students throughout the academy this week. I feel it is important that you are aware of the messages that have been shared so that we can work together to keep your children safe online.

It cannot go unrecognised that social media and online technology dominates a significant part of many people's lives in today's society. The impact of lockdown, more free time and more forms of social media being available, make it difficult to escape from and further enhance any potential risks.

As a school we endeavour to proactively deal with, support and intervene on issues related to social media outside of school, including bullying and the escalation of any inappropriate behaviour to relevant agencies. It is our absolute duty to ensure that young people are educated and supported to use social media in a safe and sensible way.

Following a number of recent concerns that have been brought to our attention, we are addressing the following issues with all students in assemblies this week:

Legal ages for accessing and using social media accounts:

The legal age for a Tik Tok account is twelve; facebook, twitter, Instagram and snapchat accounts are thirteen. WhatsApp is sixteen and Youtube is eighteen (although with parental consent it is thirteen). Please be mindful of this in your role of monitoring your child's phone accounts and social media use.

The difference between 'public' and' private' account settings.

The assemblies ensure students are educated to understand that when they create a social media account the default app setting is a 'public' account. Students have been actively encouraged to ensure that all social media accounts they use are set to 'private'. This is achieved by changing the privacy settings on their social media apps.

If accounts are set to 'private' they are not able to be followed by anyone who they do not know and have to accept 'friends'. Private accounts are the safest way to ensure your child's online social media content is kept safe and secure and not able to be accessed by anyone they do not know. If an account is 'public' anyone can access the material that your child shares online.

I have been surprised to learn that some of our students have thousands of followers or are being followed by thousands of people. In the interests of safeguarding and ensuring that your children are as safe as possible, I have asked that they review their followers and delete / block anyone that they do not know.

I have shared examples of fake online profiles and other case studies to ensure our students understand the risks of connecting with people they do not know.

The impact of taking, storing and sharing inappropriate images / sexual images of children. This is classified as child pornography and is a criminal offence.

All students have been advised of the seriousness and risks posed by taking, storing and sharing inappropriate images of themselves or other young people.

As a result, I have asked all students to ensure that their devices only contain appropriate images.

As a parent, it is worth you knowing that there is a facility on the Snapchat App called 'my eyes only'. This feature requires a separate password and is often used to store things that are secretive.

How to report concerns about social media if your child fears they are being exploited or have been approached inappropriately.

In the assemblies I have ensured that students know they can report any concerns they may have to any adult in school. In addition, I have discussed the use of CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) as a mechanism for reporting any concerns to the police. This website is featured on the schools intranet page and is readily accessible for students in school or at home online.

There is a wealth of information on their website for parents too, so if you require any further support, this is a great place to start.

https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/

> Are you worried about online sexual abuse or the way someone has been communicating with you online? - CEOP
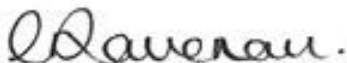> Are you being bullied? If you are being bullied, or you are not ready to make a report to CEOP, you can talk to Childline anonymously online or on the phone - No worry is too big or too small.
> www.ceop.police.uk

We have been truly alarmed over recent weeks about how vulnerable some of our students have been through their online social media accounts and how they have been exploited.

As parents, I am encouraging you to play an active role in monitoring your child's mobile phone, electronic devices and social media accounts. Ultimately, we want your children to be safe in their online use and feel that many still need parental guidance, support and monitoring to ensure that this is the case.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs L Daveran
Assistant Headteacher