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Dear Parents and Carers,

As we begin the summer term of this academic year, we are now faced with the prospect that our children probably know more about technology than we do, except of course if we work in the business. For the next few newsletters I hope to be concentrating in short bursts on the key ways we all can stay safe online.

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Safeguarding Children

Children these days are certainly different – they are growing up in the digital age where the use of technology and the internet is widespread, keeping us 'connected' almost constantly. They are more confident users of technology, and certainly are more adventurous! You might even think that they know much more about it than you do. However, what they don't have is the life experience, maturity and wisdom to handle many of the situations they may encounter. Let's have a look at some

Protecting Passwords

In this digital age, passwords are the keys to your online life. If we were to stop and check how many usernames and passwords we need, it will most certainly be more than 10 unique combinations to remember. We need to try to encourage our children to use safe passwords. Don't use the same password for everything – if they malicious people crack the password once, they now have access to everything! Instead, get them to think sensibly about passwords that can be easily remembered and you as the parent could have a record of their passwords (which is password

The following websites are good sources of information:

https://www.getsafeonline.org/safeguarding-children/

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/

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protected of course!) until they are old enough to remember for themselves. Encourage them not to share any of their PIN and password information with anyone, including their siblings and best friends.

Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is something that can cause very negative effects in your children. Just like playground bullying, cyber bullying is distressing, even more so because the internet facilitates being connected 24 hours a day. Children who are bullied, either in real life or online, are more likely to esperience anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, depression, changes in eating or sleeping habits, health issues and loss of interest and lack of achievement in school. All children must be made aware that it is wrong to text, post and share pictures, videos and comments that hurts others in any way. If this happens to your child, keep a record of the bullying by taking screen shots in case you need to get the authorities involved. Also, please make sure that your children know they should guard their devices and never give out password or PINs that are used to access them.

Music, Video and File Sharing

The internet is generally the go to place for music and videos, and indeed other forms of entertainment. The thing young people do is download and share with their friends the things they find amusing and entertaining. However, there are issues they need to be aware of, e.g.the possible breaching of copyright laws on the free to use file sharing websites, the radical use of respectable looking websites (distribution of racist or other unlawful material) and the fact that using these sites can make their devices vulnerable to various malware and spyware. Do your own research and show your children where they can legally download music and video – like Amazon and iTunes – and inform them of the risk and consequences of 'stealing' others' work.

Safe Browsing

As we know, the internet is a vast place full of resources. We can find an answer to practically anything online. However, just as in real life, not all the resources that are literally 'at our fingertips' is safe for our children. Remember to have many conversations about safe 'surfing' on the internet and point them to use safe search engines. Make sure that your browser has been set to provide its build in security and privacy features. Set search engines to filter out any inappropriate material. Set YouTube to restricted access (found right at the bottom of the page) so inappropriate content is not shown in their searches. Get into the habit of checking the parental controls of their devices on a regular basis and remember to show an interest in what your children are doing online.

For more information please visit the getsafeonline.org website. It has been the source for much of the information in this edition of the newsletter.

Many thanks

Charmaine Gawley

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