

21 January 2022

Dear families

### **Important E-Safety Safeguarding Advice**

We are concerned that a large number of our students continue to have access to the internet at home without appropriate parental supervision despite previous communication from the academy.

A particular concern is the number of students who have set up their own devices, accounts / profiles in order to access social media platforms and websites / games such as Youtube, Snapchat, Fortnite, Twitter, TikTok, WhatsApp and Snapchat. There is an increasing number of incidents arising via Playstation Messenger and the app Discord; an instant messaging and digital distribution platform.

Roblox is targeted to appeal to children and, although many of the games are appropriate with the suggested PEGI rating of 7+, we have been informed that there is a lack of moderation (despite language filters) in the chat features and uploaded user content, which leaves children at risk of exposure to inappropriate adult content and open to bullying and abuse.

As a result of these accounts being set up, there have been incidents where unkind words and behaviour have taken place at weekends, late evenings and particularly over the school holidays.

We are therefore, again, reminding parents to be acutely aware of their child's online activity; the majority of the families were not aware of the incidents outlined above, so we urge you to check electronic devices (including mobile phones) daily to see what your child is accessing, publishing or communicating online. E-safety is a key part of the academy's computing curriculum and we know that families will echo the importance of online safety to their children.

Social media, the internet and access to online material can have huge benefits and can be a positive influence in the life of children and teenagers but only if the right safeguards are put in place to ensure children do not experience the negative aspects of life online.

The Terms of Service to create a Youtube account state that the person is, at least, 18 years of age. We, therefore, advise that if your child has a Youtube subscription / account that this is deactivated regardless of whether it is supervised. Children do not need to subscribe to Youtube in order to watch appropriate Youtube videos. Please ensure your Safesearch settings are enabled to allow your child to search for videos safely.

In terms of other social media platforms, the guidance states that a person must be over the age of 13 to access these. Again, we have dealt with incidents where parents believed their supervision was adequate but unfortunately they were unaware of what exactly was being said on these social media platforms.

There have been issues relating to the use of Fortnite – a game with a 12+ PEGI rating – irrespective of whether a child is supervised. Advice from PEGI is that this age restriction should be increased by the parent if you feel your child is susceptible to addictive online behaviour. Further issues have arisen in school through things being communicated through headsets both on Fortnite and Playstation Messenger.

Twitter and Discord requires its users to be aged 13+ regardless of whether parents are monitoring use.

Snapchat asks for a date of birth upon sign up, and if the birth date indicates that the user is under 13, they are unable to create an account.

We strongly recommend that age guidelines are adhered to at all times.

We all have a duty to safeguard our students at home and in school.

Further advice and information can be found <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/> and <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>

Thank you in advance for your support in ensuring that your child is safe when accessing the internet and using devices.

Best wishes



**Miss Parry  
Acting Principal**

