

5<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Dear Parents

### **E-Safety Advice**

As you will be aware we take E-Safety very seriously as part of our curriculum and also regularly talk to the children about how to stay safe online as well as organise annual workshops. We also aim to support and advise parents as much as possible as we are very conscious that technology is developing so fast that it is challenging to keep up to date. To this end the Key Stage Two parents will be aware that we recently held workshops about the dangers of online gaming and social network sites with the emphasis on being mindful of 'friends' on the internet.

There are differences of opinions between parents as to what age we should discuss these dangers with children; however, the fact that parents are discussing these matters and there is a heightened awareness of potential issues, can only be positive. You will see from the warning below from Kent police that children are online from a startlingly young age.

I would like to draw your attention to a tab on our website: Information/Safeguarding/Advice for parents and pupils. In this area we have added links to a number of useful websites which give advice and we have also uploaded letters that we have sent out to parents in the past couple of years which focus on specific apps which have been of concern.

Safer Internet Day is Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February and we are currently undertaking a short survey of the children in Year 3 to 6 to gauge what their online usage and habits are. We hope to be able to share the feedback with you shortly afterwards. Initial feedback from Years 3 and 4 indicates that Minecraft and Roblox are the two most popular games children are using at the moment.

We have also sent information home recently about a sponsored event called 'No Tech for Breck' where you could challenge your child or yourself to use no technology for a day. Sponsor forms are in the office.

We very much want to work in collaboration with parents on this crucial element of the education of their children and would be very happy to talk with you about any specific concerns you may have. We have recently been alerted to a message which has been circulating from Kent Police and I have included it below. Please read carefully.

**Warning:** *We are putting out this post following our visit to a school yesterday. As most people know we are concerned about the popular app ROBLOX which is by far the most popular game played by children from 5 to 10 years of age.*

*We were talking to a very large group of Year 1 students and we were shocked when over half of them said they were playing ROBLOX. When we spoke to Year 2 at least 70% of them were playing the game.*

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*Most of these children then disclosed that they had online friends in ROBLOX that their parents didn't know about. It got worse when many of the children stated they had received many in game messages from 'strangers' and that they hadn't told their parents. All of the children then stated that they had seen 'naked' characters walking around the game and that the characters were doing very adult things. The inappropriate content has been disclosed to us thousands of times by young children but we were previously unaware that the children were being sent numerous messages. When talking to Year 3 students they suggested that a lot of the messages are inappropriate. In all cases the children aren't telling their parents.*

*Most of the young children we spoke to yesterday appear to have been talking to strangers in the game by using a headset to speak. The headset is usually just a normal set of ear pods that you would get bundled with an Apple device as opposed to a specific gaming accessory.*

*We would advise every parent to check their child's ROBLOX account and look to see if they have friends that they do not know. Many of the children we spoke to yesterday said their accounts were 'maxed out' meaning they have 200 online friends.*

*We would also ask parents to check the child's in game message inbox to check if they have been receiving inappropriate messages.*

**PLEASE CAN EVERYONE SHARE THIS POST SO THAT PARENTS KNOW TO CHECK THEIR CHILD'S ACCOUNT!**

If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Mrs J. Shackel  
Head of Prep School