Dear Parents/Carers,

I have been provided with the following information that I thought was important to pass onto you. The messages that the author gives are hard hitting and I advise caution.

INTERNET SAFETY UPDATE – April 2018

Social networking sites and apps allow children to be incredibly creative online, keep in touch with friends and express themselves using a whole range of different media and applications such as video, photos, music, and chat. They offer fantastic opportunities for communication and social connections. Our aim is to teach pupils, and support parents, in learning how children can navigate the digital world safely.

We would like to alert you to the latest advice we have received:

Live.ly & Musical.ly (age 13+)
Following an investigation, Channel 4 have uncovered evidence that children as young as nine are being groomed and bombarded with sexually explicit messages on the social media app 'Musical.ly' and the streaming site 'Live.ly'. For more information see:https://www.channel4.com/news/children-bombarded-with-sexually-explicit-chat-on-musical-ly-and-live-ly

Blue Whale Challenge
The online game 'Blue Whale Challenge' is growing in popularity amongst school children in the UK. Players move through a series of levels involving horror movies, self-harm and suicide. It has been reported that as a result, a number of teenagers have attempted to take their own lives. The following links provide more information but please be advised that you may find the content distressing:
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4446556/Police-warn-Blue-Whalesuicide-   game-heading-UK.html
http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/39718654/police-issue-warning-aboutblue-whale-game-targeting-vulnerable-people

Yellow (age 17+)
Similar to the adult dating app 'Tinder', there is a new app called 'Yellow', which allows users to connect with strangers by swiping right on their profile picture. When two users 'like' each other they can chat via the picture-messaging service Snapchat. Concerns have been raised that because Yellow does not verify ages or have a live monitoring system, the site is being targeted to groom children. If you permit your child to use Snapchat, they may also be exposed to Yellow.

Snapchat (age 13+)
Snapchat have updated their photo messaging service so that people can now see a user's location each time they open the app. If you have permitted your child to use Snapchat, please be aware that their exact location can be seen by anyone they have approved as a 'friend'. To disable this facility and remove a user from the map, select Ghost Mode on the map settings. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-40382876

Movie Star Planet (age 4+)
'Movie Star Planet' is a game that rewards children with 'coins' for making new friends but there is no way to guarantee that users are actually who they say they are. This weekend, a Wokingham primary aged pupil made a new 'friend', who then asked for both her Apple ID and a photograph. The 'friend' said that she wasn't happy with the way she looked, and presented a photograph of herself as a young girl. Once the parents realised what had happened, they uninstalled the game. Last night the child was contacted again via Messenger at 9.30pm!

Thinking for Tomorrow Today

Should you allow your child to have an online profile, we strongly advise that you:

- ✓ Set up a profile of your own so you understand how the site works;
- ✓ Look at the parents' information section on each social media site you permit your child to use;
- ✓ Ensure your child accepts you as a 'friend' on their profile so you can see what they post online;
- ✓ Check your child's profile is set to private and that only their real-life friends can see any information they post;
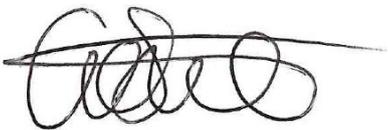- ✓ Monitor how your child communicates with others.

When monitoring your child's use of the internet, please be aware:

- Many sites use 'targeted' advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual nature, depending on the age they stated they were when they registered. If they pretended to be older, there is an increased risk that they will be exposed to age-inappropriate content and materials;
- Children may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life which increases the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour;
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on social media is NOT moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children;
- Photographs shared by users are NOT moderated, exposing children to inappropriate images and encouraging them to post their own;
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and being untruthful about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options;
- Social media sites can be exploited by bullies and used by adults for inappropriate contact with children;
- Social media sites cannot and do not verify members, therefore, anyone can lie about who they really are.

We recommend all parents visit the following websites for information on keeping children safe online:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk
www.net-aware.org.uk
www.getsafeonline.org
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/

Yours sincerely,

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