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Dear Parent/Carer,   12ᵗʰ March 2018

Internet safety and the use of Social Media

Lampard Community School is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet and we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a growing concern, due to the increase in inappropriate use of Instagram, Facebook and other messaging and texting sites. Many of the issues that have been brought to our attention recently have involved the use of **Instagram** in particular:

> *Instagram - an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service which enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms.* ***You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.***

Children are often creating 'groups' to which others are joining. This means that all information is shared with anyone who is in the group so privacy is lost and in some cases strangers have been added to the group.

We understand that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the ways that our children are using new and ever changing technologies. However, when monitoring your child's internet use, please remind yourself of the concerns of social media:

- Many sites use 'targeted' advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other appropriate nature, depending on the age they stated when they registered. They may have lied about their age to get an account, making them appear older than they are, increasing this risk.
- Young people may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour. The general rule is, if they aren't friends in real life, they shouldn't be 'friends' online.
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on social media is **NOT** moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for young people.
- Photographs shared by users are **NOT** moderated and therefore young people could be exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own.
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options.
- Social media sites can be exploited by bullies and for inappropriate contact.
- Social media sites cannot and do not verify its members, therefore, it is important to remember that if your child can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else.

Primarily, these occurrences and reported incidents of misuse of social media sites happen at home, after school hours when children have access to web sites that are blocked in school. With this in mind, we feel it important to point out to parents the risks of unregulated use of such sites, so you can make informed decisions as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not and when and how to monitor their use, particularly at night time. **We strongly advise a device free bedroom policy after bedtime to allow for uninterrupted sleep and rest**.

Although we cannot govern matters occurring out of school hours, which is parental responsibility, we will take action (such as reporting under age profiles) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our pupils, including reporting the use of inappropriate images of young people to the police, as this is a legal matter. This also refers to any inappropriate messages or text messages.

Should you decide to allow your child to have an online profile we strongly advise you:
- Check their profile is set to private and that only their friends can see information they post.
- Monitor your child's use and talk to them about safe and appropriate online behaviour such as not sharing personal information and not posting or messaging offensive/inappropriate messages or photo's.
- Monitor your child's use of language and how they communicate to other people, ensuring profanity is discouraged.
- Have a look at advice for parents on the social media sites such as NSPCC, Common Sense Media and Digital Parenting CEOP and also our school website.
- Set up your own profiles so you understand how the site works and ask them to have you as their friend on their profile so you know what they are posting online.

Please can you make sure your child understand the following rules:
- Always keep your profile private. **Never tell anyone your password.**
- Never accept friends you do not know in real life.
- Never post anything which could reveal your identity including photographs wearing school uniform, where possible.
- **Never post anything you wouldn't want your parents (or teachers to see).**
- Never agree to meet somebody you only know online without telling a trusted adult.
- Always tell someone if you feel threatened or someone upsets you.

Through lessons provided at school and assemblies, we do our best to provide our children with the awareness and knowledge they need in order to recognise and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful behaviour and to respond appropriately. However, it is only through a collaborative effort between parents and teachers that we will succeed in creating responsible and safe cyber citizens.

If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact myself, your child's class teacher or the Care & Safeguarding Team.

Thank you for your support with this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mr R Unsworth
Care & Safeguarding Deputy