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Dear Parent/Carer

As we approach the summer holidays it may be timely to think about how we keep our children and young people safe when using the internet and mobile technologies.

Inappropriate use of the internet and mobile technologies, such as trolling, sexting, cyber bullying or sexual exploitation, can, as we are all aware, have a devastating impact on the lives of our children and young people.

The following advice has been supplied by the PSNI and endorsed by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) and you may find it helpful.

We all deserve to be able to use the internet to learn, explore and connect with each other; however we all need to be aware of the risks involved in doing so especially on social media. Everyone may find the following advice helpful:

Don't share personal information or images with people who you don't know.

Don't accept friend requests with someone you don't know - everyone online may not be who they say they are.

Set privacy settings on all devices so that only people you know can view your account.

Don't post anything online that you are not happy to be shared, particularly nude or nearly nude images or videos. It may seem like a bit of fun with friends at the time but there is always a chance those images could be shared or get into the wrong hands and could lead to harmful situations such as stalking, abuse or blackmail.

If someone has made you feel uncomfortable or you have had disturbing interaction online, tell police or a trusted adult. You can ring the police on 101 or for help and advice ring Childline on 0800 1111 or Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.

The internet can be a great place but it is important to remember there are people out there who may wish to abuse, exploit, intimidate or bully you online – if this happens to you, tell someone immediately.

Remember that if things do go wrong online, there are people who can help.

If you receive any inappropriate images or links, it is important that you do not forward it to anyone else. Contact police or tell a trusted adult immediately. By doing this you could help prevent further such incidents. You will not get into trouble.

Parents and carers may find the following advice particularly helpful:

The most important thing is to have conversations with your children -talk to them about the benefits and dangers of the internet so that you can empower them to use the internet safely.

Cultivate an interest in their online activities - their favorite websites, online games and interests and keep an eye on what they are doing online.

Don't be afraid to ask your children who they are talking to online and what they are talking about and remind them how important it is to tell a trusted adult if something happens online that makes them feel uncomfortable or worried because there are people who can help.

Become a “net-savvy” parent – the best safeguard against online dangers is being informed. Jump in and learn the basics of the Internet – read articles, take a class, and talk to other parents. You do not have to be an expert to have a handle on your child’s online world.

Go to www.getsafeonline.org for lots of useful advice and information on how to stay safe online.

I hope that you will find this information helpful and we will continue to share information and advice with you as it becomes available to us.

Yours sincerely

Mrs K Bell
Principal