Online Safety Guideline for Children

The evolving online dynamic

During this time of social distancing, the online world has been a big benefit to us all. It is the closest window into the outside world and helps us get most of our work done. With the beginning of online teaching and increased online interactions, your child will also be using the internet much more than before and this will be normal. However, we as a school recommend a few guidelines to help maintain the safety and wellbeing of your child.

How can it impact my child?

The lack of stimulation and activity can create boredom which leads to feelings of frustration and possible acting out in your child. Hence the internet can be a good substitute and come with a host of benefits. However it doesn't take away the impact the internet can cause on the mind of a developing child (ages 1-22). These include but are not limited to,

- addictions to the screen,
- addiction to material on the internet (games/adult content),
- risk of being catfished by online predators,
- using the internet to cope maladaptively,
- substituting online communication for person-to-person interactions, and
- being led to click on links which will lead the students astray or even infect the devices with viruses.

What can I do to create a safe online environment for my child?

Given the current situation, asking your child to abstain from using the internet will not be practical, nor will it be beneficial. But as parents you can set guidelines as well as create a safety net. The following steps can help ensure that you create the safety that your child requires.

1. **Have a discussion with your child about online use.**
   - This includes informing your child about only accessing trusted sites, and not clicking on links that appear on chats or the web at large.
   - Tell your child not to share any personal details with anyone online. Further tell them not to share any pictures and to inform you if such requests are made.
   - Discuss times of use including length. Familiarise yourself with the time table issued by school so you are aware of the times your child needs to be online. Do not restrict your child's internet use just to these times as he too will need his free time to interact with others online.
   - Create a contract with your child which will help regulate his non essential time online

* prolonged use of the screen without breaks can cause physical issues (eye and back etc). Ensure your child takes a 5 min break every 40 mins or latest after 90 mins to move around and look out the window at objects in the distance.

2. **Install an antivirus guard - even a free one.**

   https://www.opendns.com/home-internet-security/
   https://kidlogger.net/features.html
   https://www.kaspersky.co.uk/safe-kids#installation

3. Monitor your child's internet use

- ensure that the device is used in an open space where you can either hear or monitor what your child is doing online. Watch

4. Create a time table

- this should involve activities around the house/with family members free of screen time.

5. Familiarise yourself

- with safety features of the apps your child will be using at this time (i.e -zoom etc).

6. Be sensitive to your child

- as children do not always abide by instructions, our frustrations may also spill over. This is understandable. However, we must try to strike a very fine balance during this time to function effectively.

7. Spend time with your child

- the safety and wellbeing of your child will ultimately be determined by the quality and time you spend with them. Discuss their fears and inquire after them. Engage with your child and inquire how he is feeling as well as how his classes were.
- it might be difficult for your child to focus or perform as he used to during this time of uncertainty, which is normal and can be expected from anyone. Do not push them beyond reason and know that it is nothing to be alarmed about but a normal reaction to the current situation.

8. Set aside time for physical exercise

- Set aside some time for physical exercise either in terms of running / walking / cycling / playing catch/indoor exercise etc. Growing children have a lot of energy in them which needs to be spent in a positive way.
- This too could be something which is done as a family.