

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

**RE: WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR STUDENTS AND CHILDREN SAFE - INTERNET SAFETY**

Here at Northumberland PRU we believe strongly that Internet safety is an important part of keeping children safe online. We have security measures in place within Northumberland PRU, which are constantly monitored, to help safeguard all pupils from any potential dangers. This includes carefully controlling and monitoring which websites and apps can be used by staff and students on the school premises.

Internet safety is taught to all pupils in our assemblies, ICT and PSHE lessons; explaining and demonstrating how to stay safe and behave appropriately online.

We can only be successful in keeping children safe online if we work with you to ensure that this message is consistent. Your help is needed to talk to your children about how they can keep safe and behave appropriately online. The widespread availability and use of social networking application bring opportunities to understand, engage and communicate with audiences in new ways. It is important that we can use these technologies and services effectively and flexibly. You may find your children asking to engage with technology that you have no knowledge or experience of. Children are accessing a greater amount of content online, than we were ever exposed to in our childhood.

Please be mindful of computer game age limits that you purchase. Like many other schools, we have found several pupils to have played mainstream computer games such as Grand Theft Auto and Call of Duty which have an age restriction of 18+.

Please also be aware that social media services like Facebook and YouTube have a minimum age limit of 13 (we have included what some of the most used site's policies are in the appendix). They do this for a reason. If you choose to allow your children to have these accounts, then you will want to discuss with them the boundaries you expect. Please be aware that children may or can accidentally or deliberately be exposed to unwanted or unpleasant content or comments online and there are steps you can take at home to minimise this risk.

**WHAT CAN PARENTS/CARERS DO? GROUND RULES**

- Discuss as a family how the internet will be used in your house. Consider what should be kept private online (personal information, photos etc.) and decide rules for making and

- meeting online friends. Make sure you know what your child is doing online much like you would offline.
- Handing their phone to you before bed as large amounts of Northumberland PRU pupils inform us they are up way past midnight using snapchat or TikTok

## **ONLINE SAFETY**

- Install antivirus software, secure your internet connection, and use Parental Control functions for computers, mobile phones and games consoles to block unsuitable content or contact
- Remember that parental control tools are not always 100% effective and sometimes, unsuitable content can get past them, so don't rely on them alone to protect your child.

## **LOCATION**

- Think about locating your computer in a supervised family area. Always supervise the use of webcams in an application, which allows voice or video chat. Consider your child's use of other devices that allow internet access such as Mobile Phones and Games Consoles.

## **DIALOGUE**

- Talk to your child and ask them to show or even teach you how they use the internet, learn which websites or tools they like to use and why. Learning together can often open opportunities to discuss safe behaviour with your child.
- Always ensure your child knows how to block or report people online who send nasty or inappropriate messages or content. Encourage your child not to retaliate or reply.
- Make sure your child knows to tell an adult they trust if they see something online that makes them feel scared, worried, or uncomfortable.

It is essential to be realistic - banning the internet or technology will not work and it often makes a child less likely to report a problem. Education around safe use is essential. Here at Northumberland PRU we are teaching children to follow these:

## **GOLDEN RULES!**

1. Keep your personal information safe, share with only people you know.
2. Use websites that are suitable for your age and remember that you are still talking to strangers.
3. Be nice to others online, in the way you would expect other people to be nice to you.
4. Tell an adult if you see or hear something that you think is not right

**Websites for more information:**

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) – Visit the “Parent/Carer” Section and use the “Click CEOP” button to seek advice

[www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com) – Visit the ‘Know It All’ Section for an interactive guide about online safety

[www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org) - Free up-to-date Security advice, age specific advice

<https://www.common sense media.org> - Excellent advice about Internet Safety

Please help your child to stay safe online.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R Carr".

Mr Richard Carr

Headteacher

## **Appendix**

### **SNAP CHAT**

Parents need to know that Snapchat is a popular messaging app that allows teens to exchange user-generated photos, texts, videos, and calls -- both audio and video. The developer claims that "Snaps" can't be saved within the app and are viewable only for one to 10 seconds before disappearing from the recipient's device, noting that the app notifies the sender if the recipient takes a screenshot of an image. If users opt to share their location, they can see friends on a "Snap Map" and see Snapchat Stories from other users in various locations, and if they do opt in, they can use "Ghost mode" to see others but not be visible themselves. In terms of location, friends can also send their location and request a friend's location, which will update live for eight hours unless turned off. Snapchat is for users aged 16+.

### **FACEBOOK**

Facebook is targeted at older teenagers and adults. They have a "No under 13" registration policy and recommend parental guidance for 13- to 16-year-olds. The following are extracts from Facebook's privacy policy: "Facebook requires everyone to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account. Creating an account with false info is a violation of our terms. This includes accounts registered on the behalf of someone under 13.

### **TIKTOK**

Parents need to know that TikTok is a social network for sharing user-generated videos, most of which feature music and sound effects. Users can also remix others' work and browse content created by other users, including famous recording artists. Since the app features a lot of music, you can expect swearing and sexual content in some songs. Though videos viewed during the review process contained only some tight/revealing clothing, depending on which accounts users follow and what content they like, it's possible to encounter sexually suggestive and explicit material. The app is recommended for users aged 16+.

### **X (FORMERLY TWITTER)**

X says it that is not designed for children under 13, however there are no restrictions in place to stop them opening an account. They will have to enter their birth date, but this is to stop direct advertising to minors. The following is an extract from X's privacy policy: "Our Services are not directed to persons under 13. If you become aware that your child has provided us with personal information without your consent, please contact [privacy@twitter.com](mailto:privacy@twitter.com). We do not knowingly collect personal information from children under 13. If we become aware that a child under 13 has provided us with personal information, we take steps to remove such information and terminate the child's account."

## **WHATSAPP**

WhatsApp is a messaging facility via smart phones. The users can send instant messages, photos, and voice messages. WhatsApp states that it is not for users under the age of 16. The following is an extract from their privacy policy: "...set forth in these Terms of Service, and to abide by and comply with these Terms of Service. In any case, you affirm that you are at least 16 years old as the WhatsApp Service is not intended for children under 16. If you are under 16 years of age, you are not permitted to use the WhatsApp Service."

## **INSTAGRAM**

Instagram is a popular, free social networking app that lets users post photos and videos, follow celebrities and friends, and send messages. It's owned by Facebook but has a photo-forward format that's more appealing to teens. According to the terms of service, you must be 13, but there's no age- verification process, so it's very easy for children under 13 years to sign up. Other parental advice platforms rate Instagram for age 15 and up because of mature content, access to strangers, marketing ploys, and data collection.

## **ONLY FANS**

People register and make or view subscription-based profiles on ONLYFANS.COM. Creators share photos, videos, and other content, with few language, nudity, or other limitations. Users can't really search for random profiles by keyword; the site shows you a limited number of suggested ones, but you need to enter a name or username to find a profile. Some can be viewed for free, but a number require a paid subscription. Users may see a prompt to enter credit card information and be told they won't be charged to access a free profile. It is an adult site for 18+ as it shows and sells explicit content amongst other things.