

5<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope this letter finds you and families safe and well.

At this time of lockdown, it is inevitable that technology is playing an even bigger part in our day-to-day lives and is thankfully allowing us to keep in regular, close contact with our family and friends, as well as keeping us entertained and able to work from home, where possible. It does however increase the risk of online crime and also can put children at increased risk of being subjected to dangerous behaviour online, with reports that online grooming were on the rise since 2020. Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February is Safer Internet day which provides a great opportunity for further discussion around online safety with young people. Assemblies and PSHE sessions throughout the week will be focused on this topic.

Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning are celebrating #SaferInternetDay on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February. They are running a free online workshop 11.00am-1.00pm, specifically for parents and carers to discover how we can all create #AnInternetWeTrust, the information flyer is on the school website [here](#) and you can book through [Booking form for parent/carers workshop](#)

The government has released guidance; **support for parents and carers to keep children safe online**, this guidance can be found [here](#).

In the government guidance there are links to a number of useful websites, including 'Thinkuknow'. One particular page on this website may be useful when discussing the issue of online safety at home, it includes a number of activity packs for both 11-14 year olds and 14 years + and also short videos to support parents, this section of the website can be found [here](#).

Childnet has released a parent and carers toolkit, which can be accessed [here](#).

I would also like to draw your attention to our Home Protect Filtering guidance which can be found [here](#).

We know that the world of social media plays a big role in the lives of many young people and it can be incredibly difficult to effectively monitor your children's phones and devices. The Coronavirus lockdowns mean more time available to young people. Since their usual social lives are more limited, spending extra time in front of screens can seem like the only way to make contact. We also understand that the majority of parents are now having to work from home and cannot always closely monitor their children all day. Through conversations with young people and recommendations from professionals it is clear that open dialogue around issues with online dangers can have a positive impact on reducing the risks. This, along with finding screen time and screen usage routines and balance can help to ensure that young people have a healthy approach to social media and the use of devices.

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**Mr Gary Mullings BA (Hons)**  
Headteacher

The world of social media is ever changing and progress in this area seems to be rapid. Here are some helpful sites that give up to date information about apps and social media:

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>

Below we have collated information on the most popular apps used by young people to hopefully help support you whilst having conversations with your children.

App/Site	Useage	Age Restriction
Snapchat	Photosharing (including editing) Messaging Social Networking	13
YouTube	Social video platform	13 (to have an account)
Instagram	Photosharing (including editing) Messaging Social Networking	13
TikTok	Creation of music and video clips (including editing) Social Networking	13
WhatsApp	Messaging	16
Twitter	Social Networking	13
Discord	Free voice and text app used mostly whilst online gaming	13

We are also aware that there are a range of real-time face-to-face communication apps that are being used extensively at the moment such as FaceTime, Skype, Zoom and Houseparty. These have a range of differing age requirements, yet all carry the same risks to young people.

App/Site	Age Restriction
FaceTime	No age - just Apple ID
Skype	13
Zoom	16
Houseparty	13

I appreciate there is a lot of information in this letter, however hopefully you will find it a useful resource that you can continue to refer to.

If you have any concerns, please contact [ehynes@vynersschool.org.uk](mailto:ehynes@vynersschool.org.uk) or [afoster@vynersschool.org](mailto:afoster@vynersschool.org).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Hynes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Emma Bashford-Hynes**  
**Assistant Headteacher**