Dear Parents/Guardians

Internet Safety is an important part of keeping children safe at Mount Charles School. We have extensive security measures in place in school, which are monitored to help safeguard pupils from potential dangers or unsuitable material. Internet Safety is taught to all pupils, explaining and demonstrating how to stay safe and behave appropriately online.

We feel it is important to point out to parents the risks of unregulated use of the Internet when the children are at home, so you can make informed decisions as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not and to consider how to monitor their use, particularly at night time when we strongly advise a device-free bedroom policy after bedtime to allow for uninterrupted sleep and rest.

Current issues facing our children have involved the use of:

- Skype - a video and messaging app. **You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**
- Instagram - an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service which enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them. **You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**
- Facebook - a social networking site. **You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**
- Snapchat – An instant messaging app for smartphones. **The user agreement requires users to be age 13 or older.**
- Video games rated above the child's age (many of which include online interaction and exposure to violence and inappropriate language and images)
- You Tube – online video sharing (there have been reports of our pupils posting videos of themselves online). **Terms of use require users to be age 13 or older, with parental permission required for 13-17 year olds.**

- Many sites use 'targeted' advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other inappropriate 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 son/daughter can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else.

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CHARLIE'S AFTER SCHOOL CLUB MOBILE NO: 07929 660673 (8.15-8.30 & 2.45-6.00 term-time)
WEB SITE: www.mount-charlessch.org
MORVEN RD., ST AUSTELL, CORNWALL. PL25 4PP

Although we cannot govern matters occurring out of school hours, which is parental responsibility, we **will** take action (such as reporting under age profiles or making a referral to other agencies) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our pupils.

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 photos.
- ✓ Monitor your child's use of language and how they communicate to other people.
- ✓ Have a look at advice for parents on the social media sites.
- ✓ 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.

Make sure your son/daughter understands the following rules:

- ❖ Always keep your profile private.
- ❖ Never accept friends you do not know in real life.
- ❖ Never post anything which could reveal your identity (including photographs wearing school uniform)
- ❖ **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.

As a family, discuss how the Internet will be used in your house. Make sure you know what your child is doing online much like you would offline. Be aware of your child's use of other devices that allow Internet access such as mobile phones, tablets and games consoles

Install antivirus software, secure your Internet connection and use Parental Control functions for computers, tablets, 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. **The only guaranteed parental control is to be present while your child is using their device.**

It is also worth passing this information onto other homes that your children visit regularly (such as grandparents) who are perhaps not used to having children using their Internet service.

We recommend that all parents visit our 'Online Safety' page (within the Parent section of the school website) for additional advice and links.

If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact me or your child's class teacher.

Thank you for your support with this matter.

Yours sincerely

S E Simmons, Deputy Headteacher