



Dear Parent or Carer

You may have read this week about the death of a teenager who hanged himself following abuse on a website called **"Sayat.me"**. This website allows individuals to ask questions and for others to respond anonymously. From our observations this site is often misused as a way of making offensive, nasty, rude and inappropriate comments towards others. The comments are anonymous and not moderated so it means that anyone can say anything without consequence. In line with our previous advice to parents and students, we must strongly point out the dangers of these websites and remind parents of the importance of monitoring your child's online behaviour. Young people may be using these sites without your knowledge and they might be receiving incredibly offensive comments that could lead to them becoming seriously distressed and upset.

There have also been several news stories in the last month about another internet craze called **Blue Whale**. The idea of this was that young people accepted a series of challenges from an anonymous poster of the internet that became increasingly dangerous or risky as the number of days passed. The Safer Internet Centre and Internet Watch Foundation confirmed this as a hoax but it may still be worth talking to your child about these kind of risks on the internet.

Websites and Apps such as Instagram and Snapchat are quickly becoming the biggest cause of bullying and inappropriate behaviour amongst children and young adults. We often find that young people lack the maturity to use these sites responsibly and that this presents a serious danger to their safety and/or welfare. As a school we constantly educate our students on how to behave responsibly and safely online but the remaining barrier continues to be use of these sites/apps in the evenings and at weekends. Regrettably, we are limited in our ability to police this behaviour and it is only when it spills into school that we see the distress and upset it can cause.

I hope the advice below is useful how to keep children safe online:

- Restrict access to certain websites, social networks based on age, levels of safety and expectations of responsibility. Ask yourself whether each app and website is suitable for your child.
- Ensure that all profiles are private and secure.
- Remove mobile phones and online devices overnight. This reduces risk and unmonitored access.
- Have an open conversation with your child about online behaviour and abuse of this. Make sure they can talk to you about what they experience online. Help them to understand what is acceptable behaviour and how to report bullying.
- Keep an open and honest relationship with your child and ask them to show you how they are using these sites/apps. Apps such as Gallery Guardian allow parents to be alerted to inappropriate images being sent or received on their child's mobile phone.
- Ask your child for their passwords so that they are clear that you can check their online behaviour at any time. Some parents may want to check their child's online activity regularly whilst keeping a sense of privacy and balance.
- Use websites such as <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/> to find out more about websites and social networking sites and how they can be used and misused by young people.

We will always deal with instances of bullying and take them very seriously. However, when this activity takes place outside of school and uses technology that makes it hard to trace the source of the issue, this makes our jobs much harder and in some cases impossible. We hope you will support us in managing this at home and ensuring that all children in our care are safe and well supported in managing their online experience. If you are unsure about any of the content of this letter or would like further advice on how to manage your child's online presence, please do not hesitate to contact the school for further support and information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Gregory". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Mike Gregory