

10th May 2010

MLW/KBO/SHD/SCK/ESAFETY/DV140

Dear Parents/Guardians

It has been brought to our attention that a number of pupils are using social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, etc. These sites can be used to set up profiles and communicate with friends and family; however, they can also be used to bully, 'scam' and abuse young people. The minimum age limit for many of these sites is 13, but we are aware that many young people (and indeed adults) have lied about their age, or identity, online and have online profiles.

A serious matter has arisen, where several students, at a number of different schools in Kent, have been approached online, via Facebook, by someone known to the police, with very inappropriate content and messages. This matter has been reported to the police and CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) and is being dealt with appropriately, but we wish to highlight this concern to all parents/guardians.

It is essential that all pupils know how to protect their information online, report a problem and understand how to keep safe. If any pupils or parents/guardians do raise any concerns about online behaviour, or receive any suspicious messages, or friends' requests, whilst using the internet, they should visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk and use the report abuse button to report the concern to CEOP.

Should you have any concerns our e-Safety co-ordinator is Mr Turner, mtu@leighacademy.org.uk.

Some useful advice for students:

- * Make sure all online profiles are set to private or friends only.
- * Do not share any personal information online e.g. school, full name, contact details etc.
- * Think very carefully about photos and comments shared online – once it has been posted you cannot remove it and remember that anyone could possibly see it.
- * Use an internet nickname rather than your full name and why not use a cartoon picture (avatar) or your profile picture – never post pictures of yourself or your friends in school uniform, as you can be identified.
- * Make sure you only use social networking sites to speak to people you know in the real world.
- * Never arrange to meet someone you have met online, without being safe, by taking an adult with you and always meet in a public place during the day.
- * If someone says something online that makes you feel scared, worried or uncomfortable then make sure you report it to the website and/or the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) at www.thinkuknow.co.uk.
- * Visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk for more information on how to keep safe online.

Useful advice for parents/guardians:

* Know how your children are using the internet and discuss rules and boundaries for safe use and behaviour much like you would in the real world.

* Make sure your children understand that people can lie about who they are online.

* Make sure your children know how to protect themselves online such as setting profiles to private, only adding real-life friends and not sharing any personal information (including photos in school uniform).

* Wherever possible, locate the computer in a family room and supervise its use, only allow children to use webcams with adult supervision.

* Be aware that games consoles and mobile phones can also allow children to access the internet.

* If anything happens online that makes you or your child feel worried, scared or uncomfortable then report it to the website/service provider and the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) at www.thinkuknow.co.uk.

* Visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents for more information on how to keep your children safe online.

Useful websites:

* www.kent.gov.uk/esafety

* www.thinkuknow.co.uk


* www.kenttrustweb.org.uk?esafety

We regularly address these issues in our college assemblies.

Yours sincerely



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Brunel College



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Ms M Leah-Wilkinson
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