

30.11.2020

Working together around E-Safety

Dear Parent/ Carer,

I think it's fair to say that since the lockdown earlier this year our children's access to the internet and our own reliance on this form of communication has sharply increased. This brings with it multiple advantages and as such, at Bramfield House School we are seeing that our boys are staying connected with their peers outside of school in a way that previously wasn't the case.

As students use new social media platforms they're able to live stream, chat in 'end to end' or encrypted chat sites, share videos from each other's homes and arrange meet ups.

However, as contact increases, more and more we are seeing an increase in the incidents of verbal and threatening language between students online out of school time. This then can play out in school with disagreements between students. This inappropriate social interaction does distract from the main business of educating our students, it can also leave students feeling desperately unhappy and unable to manage these unkind words from their peers.

At Bramfield House School we take all students internet safety very seriously. We take every precaution possible to ensure that boys learn to use the internet appropriately whilst with us. For that reason the schools server has a very tight filtering system to protect our boys from content not suitable for their age and boys are supervised when they are online. We do our very best to educate boys about the risks online with specific curriculum lessons focused on this.

As a parent myself, I fully appreciate that supervision outside of school online is very difficult. Often your child will know far more about how gaming platforms, photo and video sharing apps and settings than you may do. I also appreciate that parents cannot fully supervise their child every second. However, it is important to remember that all of the boys that attend Bramfield House School have some form of social, emotional or mental health need. Naturally this means that they require high levels of adult supervision when interacting socially. For that reason, I am recommending that social interaction is carefully monitored between your child and his friends who attend the school online.

Often there are times students do not understand how to interact well and they make poor choices, misunderstanding social cues. Whilst I want to encourage appropriate interaction, where boys share images, talk in chatrooms and media message with each other, occasionally the content of this interaction is entirely inappropriate. This is one of the reasons we do not allow boys to have mobile phone devices during the school day.

I would like to also draw your attention to a number of websites that provide really good advice to parents on internet safety and how to manage this at home;

- <https://parentinfo.org/> - Help and advice for families in the digital world.
- <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/> - Helping children get the most out of the internet
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/> - Keeping children safe online
- <https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers> - Help to keep your child safe online
- <https://www.digizen.org/parents/> - understanding social networking

These sites advise you to take four steps:

1. Have ongoing conversations with your children about safety online.
2. Use the safety tools on social networks and other online services e.g. Facebook privacy settings
3. Decide if you want to use parental controls on your home internet.
4. Gain an understanding of devices and their parental control tools that they offer.

As a school we will take a very firm line on any form of bullying or inappropriate behaviour if boys are found to be abusing each other outside of school on social media. This may involve internal sanctions, exclusion and the police.

This week boys will be attending an assembly on E- safety and throughout the year boys will be taught in small groups about how to stay safe online. I hope in the coming months ahead we can work together to educate your child in this important life skill.

Sincerely,



Davina Bell – Head teacher