Internet, E-Safety, Cyber bullying and use of the school ICT system.

Cyberbullying is the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) deliberately to upset someone else. It can encompass all areas of technology and the internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse, personal web spaces such as Facebook, instant messaging, threats made by text messaging & phone calls and the misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities. Uploading of embarrassing photographs, 'sexting' or video clips or the posting of hurtful comments and descriptions will be treated very seriously by the school. All incidents of cyberbullying associated with a pupil's involvement in the College community will almost certainly lead to a pupil being suspended from College.

Pupils are expected to abide by our Acceptable User Policy (AUP) and to follow its guidelines. Parents should be aware that social network sites do have minimum age guidelines, for example Facebook is 13 and Twitter is 18.

Advice to parents

Whilst the internet is a remarkably useful tool when used in productive ways, we are increasingly concerned about the negative impact that it can also have when used in the wrong manner. It is a topic that we intend to continue to develop in our curriculum to meet the ever-changing challenges that young people face.

To this end, we are increasing the awareness of 'ICT ethics' within College. For this to be effective, we strongly encourage parents to work with the College to use technology in a responsible way. A number of parents have asked for guidance on this topic. If you do want to find out more we recommend the following websites:

Common Sense Media, http://www.commonsensemedia.org/
A US dedicated site aimed at 'improving the lives of children and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology'. I would recommend signing up to their weekly newsletters. The site reviews apps, games, music, TV and films to ensure parents are fully informed on the latest releases in all forms of media. It also gives age specific recommendations for families. This link is a useful guide for 'media savvy skills for parents, http://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/7-media-savvy-skills-all-parents-need-in-2014

Get Safe Online http://www.getsafeonline.org/
The UK's leading source of unbiased, factual and easy-to-understand information on online safety. It gives advice on protecting your computer, smartphones and tablets, online shopping, safeguarding children and social networking.

CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre)
http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/
ThinkuKnow is the educational arm of the UK police to keep children safe online and gives age appropriate advice to both parents and children.

'Let's Fight it Together' Cyberbullying film http://old.digizen.org/cyberbullying/fullfilm.aspx
A film that pupils at College will watch to help deal with and avoid cyberbullying.

Social Media and Gaming
A further concern is the amount of time pupils spend 'gaming' or accessing the internet and the effect that this has on sleep patterns and memory. The problem is particularly heightened when teenagers are gaming or using computers late into the night, often without their parents' knowledge. This can have a very noticeable and detrimental effect on pupil performance in school. We would urge parents to monitor their children's use of computers, ensure they are being used appropriately and take action as necessary to deal with any issues.

The following Australian website provides an informed and balanced evaluation of the effects computer gaming (and even recommends some 'good' games):
http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=243&np=295&id=2375

We also recommend these websites for advice on use of the internet & mobile phones:
- http://www.swgfl.org.uk/Staying-Safe
- http://www.safer-internet.net
- http://www.vodafone.com/parents

Reviewed and updated January 2014

Summary of advice to parents

The following few simple steps can help protect your children at home in addition to the advice and education they are given at school:

1. Teach them how to behave responsibly online and respect others in the online community. For example to download music legally and not to spread rumours about or harass other people. Using social networking sites to harass others is taken very seriously at College, even though it is likely to have taken place outside of College hours.

2. Remind them the Internet is a public place. Explain why it's still important that they don't give out their personal information online, even if they are young adults and think they know what they're doing.

3. Talk to them about their DIGITAL FOOTPRINT. Explain that any comments or images they post on the internet now could be there forever and could be accessed by anyone, including university admissions tutors and future employers.

4. Direct your son or daughter to helpful websites for support on health and wellbeing issues, such as body image, and warn them that other websites might contain harmful content promoting eating disorders or suicide, for example

5. Make sure they check with you before buying anything online.

6. Set ground rules: e.g. how much time is spent each day on games consoles and on social network sites. Wherever possible, do not let your son have an unrestricted internet connection in their bedroom, particularly at night.

7. Encourage them to talk to you if anything in their digital world upsets them. Many parents are 'friends' with their children on Facebook. However, be aware that children are increasingly creating 2nd identities in order to escape monitoring. Encourage them to ignore / block comments that are inappropriate or upsetting.

8. Make sure parental controls are set / and safe search to the right levels – obviously limited effectiveness as access to internet is everywhere.

Most of all do talk to your children regularly about what they do and who they speak to online – the best way to help to keep your son safe online is to keep the channels of communication open.

Media Articles
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationadvice/8593880/Cyberbullying-is-a-new-threat-for-children.html
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationadvice/10370012/Internet-safety-its-time-to-learn-what-your-children-know.html

Curriculum provision

ICT Ethics is the term we are giving to the development of our E-Safety provision in Life Skills. We want to put more focus on ensuring the boys use the internet effectively and are educated concerning:
*   their electronic footprint
*   their use of language online
*   the effects of bullying
*   the effects of violent video games
*   the effects of too much time spent online
*   over sexualisation of young people due to the effects of pornography, sexting and the media. There will be a particular focus how the internet affects attitudes to relationships.

This change of emphasis is important in highlighting the morality angle in the use of the internet.