

MMN/KCR

8<sup>th</sup> February, 2010

Dear Parent/Carer,

### **SAFER INTERNET**

Safer Internet Day is organised each year in February to promote safer and more responsible use of online technology and mobile phones, amongst children and young people across the world. To coincide with the 2010 date I would like to take this opportunity to remind parents of the need to protect our young people to keep them safe online.

Many parents will be concerned by some of the risks that the internet can cause and may want to understand more about social networking and what steps they might take to protect their children. To try and provide support for parents on this complex issue; we are proposing to hold a **Parents' Forum on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March starting at 6.00 pm in South Hall**, at which Headteacher, Mr. M. Milburn and I.C.T. Co-ordinator, Mrs. D. Williams will lead an interactive workshop and hold a discussion exploring the issues and what steps we can take to encourage appropriate use of the world wide web. If you would like to attend, then please complete and return the attached reply slip to Pupil Point, South Building (for the attention of Mrs. K. Cooper).

New technologies have turned all of us, and mostly young people, into publishers of information, pictures and videos. Pupils are regularly uploading photos and videos, sending them to a list of contacts usually through a social networking site such as Facebook, My space and Bebo. Photos, once online, remain online and can be seen by anyone, even years after they have been posted. In addition, innocent pictures can easily be displayed in a completely different context and they can be cut, pasted, altered or distorted. The possibility of tagging people in pictures, offered by most social networking services, makes it very easy to search for a person's photos online and find other information about them.

New technologies give tremendous opportunities for creativity. Children and teenagers, who are major users of social networking sites and other new online services, use them to express their identity. But, at the same time, children and young people are in the process of developing their personality and may be particularly vulnerable to gossip and bullying. In addition, our young people do not always realise that the personal information they post remains online and it can be accessed by anyone (including their parents, teachers, future employers and predators). Unfortunately personal information contained in social networking profiles can be used by unscrupulous individuals for purposes which may include 'grooming'.

Our data suggests that the vast majority of pupils have internet access at home and that most of their time online is spent at home, with 65% of them using the internet everyday. Pupils are using the internet for a variety of activities including listening to music, playing games and social networking, with almost half accessing a social network site everyday. With the increase in the number of laptops and mobile phones with internet access, Kingstone pupils are reporting that increasingly they are accessing the internet on devices in their bedrooms, with 47% of pupils most likely to access the internet when in their own room unsupervised. This is backed up by the fact that 76% of Kingstone pupils believe that no one is checking what sites they are accessing online. The other 24% have parents or carers who monitor a variety of things, from the amount of time they spend online, to checking their internet history (in iexplorer click favourites, then click the history tab and you can see all the websites that have been loaded on the computer) or simply checking the screen every so often.

Children and teenagers need to be empowered to manage their online identity, including publishing of pictures and videos, in a responsible way. Our pupils have received information on how to control their online identity, by using the privacy settings offered by social networking services, selecting friends online that they can trust and publishing their own photos after thinking carefully about the potential consequences.

There are simple steps that we can all take to support our young people to act responsibly online and to reinforce the messages from school. These include:

- Knowing what your children are doing online and who they are talking to.
- Keeping the computer in a family room so that you can share your child's online experience – and that they are less likely to act inappropriately (i.e. via webcam).
- Help your children to understand that they should never give out personal details to online friends — personal information includes their messenger ID, email address, mobile number and any pictures of themselves, their family or friends.
- Remind your child that if they publish a picture or video online, anyone can change it or share it. Remind them that anyone may be looking at their images and one day a future employer could!
- If your child receives spam/junk email and texts, remind them never to believe them, reply to them or use them.
- Encourage children not to open files that are from people they don't know. They won't know what they contain — it could be a virus, or worse — an inappropriate image or film.
- Help your child to understand that some people lie online and therefore, it's better to keep online mates online. They should never meet up with any strangers without an adult they trust. 70 Kingstone pupils stated that they had met up with someone who they met online, although the majority did take someone with them.
- Encourage young people to block someone online and to report them if they feel uncomfortable by using the report abuse button.

Websites for further advice:  
[www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)  
[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)  
[www.getnetwise.org](http://www.getnetwise.org)

Yours sincerely,

Mr. M. Milburn  
Headteacher

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**REPLY SLIP** – Please complete and return to Pupil Point, South Building (for the attention of Mrs. K. Cooper)

**SAFER INTERNET – PARENTS' FORUM**  
**THURSDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2010 AT 6.00 PM IN SOUTH HALL**

Pupil Name \_\_\_\_\_ Form \_\_\_\_\_

\*I/we shall/\*shall not be attending the above event in school.

If you are attending; please indicate how many:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Carer

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please delete as applicable