**FAIRCHILDES ACADEMY COMMUNITY TRUST**

**Monks Orchard Primary School**
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23 September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

**Cyberbullying and Internet Safety**

Social media and the internet are, in so many ways, a wonderful resource.  However, they can also be a real source of worry for parents and schools.
We have already had complaints this term from Year 6 children and parents about children sending and posting abusive and insulting messages through online games, social media sites and messaging apps (particularly Tik Tok and WhatsApp).  Just this week we have found out that a group of Y6 children have set up a WhatsApp group specifically to tease and insult another child.  And we have been shown screen shots of abusive and insulting messages sent by children, some as late as 11pm.
Dealing with these incidents has taken up a lot of teacher time; time that should have been spent teaching your children.

We do lots of work in school around staying safe online and cyberbullying but ultimately, when your children are not in school, we cannot control what they do or see online.  It is impossible for the school to stop this without your help.

We want to remind all parents and carers about the simple actions you can take to make sure your children are safe online.

**Set appropriate parental Control Settings on your children's devices**
Remember - you have chosen whether or not to buy your child a games console, smart phone or tablet, and you pay the bill.  All consoles, phones and tablets have parental control settings.
Please make sure you know how to use these.  It is your responsibility to make sure your child's devices are set up so that they cannot purchase or access inappropriate games, apps or sites.
Most internet service providers also have parental control settings, so please make sure you know how to set these up.
**If you choose not to set appropriate parental control settings on your child's devices, you must be prepared to deal with the consequences of that choice.**

**Check age restrictions**
Our children tell us that they regularly use Tik Tok and WhatsApp but **no primary school children should have access to either of these.**
- Tik Tok has an age restriction of 13 years, and children between 13 and 18 must have parental consent to use it.
- WhatsApp has an age restriction of 16 years.

**If your child is using Tik Tok or WhatsApp, a false age must have been given when setting up their accounts. If they can give false ages, so can anybody else who they may be in contact with via these apps.**
Children often create 'groups' on these apps, and invite others to join. This means that information is shared with anyone who is in the group and privacy is lost. We know that, in some cases, complete strangers have been added to groups that your children belong to.
**If you choose to allow your child access to these apps, you must be prepared to deal with the consequences of that choice.**

**Monitor what your child is accessing and posting**
Ensure that you check regularly what apps your child has on their phone or tablet and what games they are playing. You must also check the messages your child is sending and receiving, and the groups that they belong to.
Many parents build this monitoring into their daily or weekly routine; some have drawn up contracts with their children which say that they can only use their devices if they agree to let their parents check regularly.

We also strongly advise a device free bedroom policy. As part of the contract they have drawn up with them, many parents keep their children's phones and devices in a box in the lounge or kitchen, once they have gone to bed. This allows for uninterrupted sleep and rest, which is vital for your child's health and well-being (the NHS recommends that 11 year old children should have at least 9 hours and 30 minutes sleep, every day).

**Dealing with abusive messages and posts**
1. **Tell** an adult if you receive abusive messages, posts or comments.
2. **Never respond or retaliate** to abusive messages, posts or comments.
3. **Block** users who post abusive messages, posts or comments.
4. **Save**, take a screen shot or print abusive messages you see or receive.
5. **Always report** abusive messages, posts or comments to the service provider and, if appropriate, to the police via the CEOP website (ceop.police.uk). Most apps and social media sites now have a direct link to CEOP.

We can only tackle this problem if we do it together. We will continue to work with the children in school, to help them stay safe online, but **without your support the abuse will continue and will get worse**. So please – do take action on the advice in this letter.

If you want further advice, there are a number of useful websites you can access:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents
www.internetmatters.org
www.saferinternet.org.uk/advise-andresources/parents-and-carers
www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety
www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk
www.ceop.police.uk

Thank you for your support.

Guy Fairbairn
Headteacher