

Bebo – Facebook – Myspace

Social Networking websites – How safe is your child?

Information for parents

It has come to our attention that some students at Lord Williams's School as young as 11 are accessing these Social Networking websites. Legally they are not allowed to do so until they are 13, although some are claiming a false age in order to bypass these restrictions.

Parents have shared with us their concerns that some of our youngsters are engaging in conversations with much older teenagers. There are many pictures of Lord Williams's students on the websites (many in school uniform) and we are concerned that your son or daughter may be sharing personal information.

Many students are now accessing the internet via their mobile phones, which gives parents even less involvement than they had previously. We do appreciate how hard it is for parents to monitor exactly what is going on, but we urge you to be alert and proactive to ensure that your child stays safe.

The following is a list of information that students should **not** share on any networking websites:

- Full name
- Age
- Address
- Town / Village
- School (including pictures in school uniform which would identify the school)
- Email address
- Specific information about their movements e.g. dates, times and locations

Recent news stories have highlighted the dangers of meeting up with those whom children have met only online. It is a sad fact that not all who claim to be children are in fact children. Whilst it is still unlikely that a stranger encountered on-line will be in this category, it is important to stress that predatory paedophiles are using social networking sites to make contact with and groom young people. They are known to use false identities and to use information placed by children as hooks by which to groom their targets. They are also known to use photos of other children to facilitate their deceptions. Getting a photo of a child from a website is as easy as pressing the Print Screen button on their keyboard.

Please remind your child/hildren that **students are not allowed to bring a digital camera into school or to use the camera part of their mobile phone during the school day.** This applies both to lessons and break times.

At our Internet Safety Evening in February 2008, Donald Findlater from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation recommended the following sites which are a reliable source of information for both parents and students:

Childnet International - internet safety advice and lines for young people, parents and others:
www.childnet-int.org

Think You Know – a new website for young people of all ages giving help and information:
www.thinkuknow.co.uk

CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) – a range of information on how to stay safe online. Also include a facility enabling parents and young people to report actual or attempted abuse online:
www.ceop.gov.uk

Blog safety – enabling parents to keep up with current issues:
www.blogsafety.com and also www.childnet-int.org/blogsafety

BBC – provides useful links covering a wide range of topics:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/your_kids/safety_internet.shtml

Lord Williams's School has always taken steps to try and ensure that students are taught what they need to know to keep them safe on-line, and that relevant staff are aware of the latest 'trends' in students' use of the internet.

Graham Long, our Head of ICT, is registered with CEOP as a ThinkUKnow trainer, and Ms Roddis (Teacher of ICT/Outdoor Education Co-ordinator) sits on the DCSF Cyberbullying task force.

During ICT lessons at school the following topics are covered:

Year 7: Think U Know – A mini-module aimed at raising the awareness of all students to the issues surrounding e-safety

Year 8: Cyberbullying - A mini-module on the realities and dangers of Cyberbullying.

Year 9: E-safety

We are also looking at ways of extending these courses to students in Years 10 & 11.

The following facts were published by Strathclyde Police Force in 2008 - **disconcerting statistics about children and the Internet:**

- 1 in 7 parents have no idea what their children are viewing on the Internet.
- 3 out of 4 children who have used the Internet have encountered material that has made them feel uncomfortable.
- 2 out of 5 children have encountered scenes of violence on the Internet.
- One third of children are unaware of the dangers of using the Internet.
- 53 per cent of children have been talked to about sex on the Internet.
- 49 per cent of children have engaged in sexual conversations with people they have encountered on the Internet.
- 80 per cent of children feel that they should be better protected from harmful material and individuals on the Internet.
- Paedophiles are known to use the Internet as a way of 'grooming' children, i.e. to lure them into a false sense of security in order to facilitate sexual assaults. This so-called grooming period can last for months with children being entirely unaware of the deception.

Please support us by looking also at our article for students, by reading it through with your child/children to ensure that they understand all the issues, and by discussing with them what they have put on their on-line profiles.

Thank you.

Lord Williams's School
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