



SIR THOMAS FREMANTLE SCHOOL

A CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS AGED 11-19

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5th April 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re your child's safety online

I am writing to you today following several recent concerns being raised about students' online conduct. I am very aware that the internet is a thing beyond our control, yet I am also mindful of the number of issues that arise or spill over into school because of online behaviours/exchanges; and I am very aware of the vulnerability that all of us potentially have online. With the majority of online exchanges/interactions/activities taking place at home in the evenings, I am writing to ask you to be hyper-aware of what children are doing online, for their safety and the safety of others.

Concerns that I have range from students being in touch with strangers online to students using the online forum to be harsh and unkind to others. There was even a worrying account set up specifically to share STFS 'gossip' in an apparently anonymous forum. This 'gossip' constituted the naming of individuals and public discussion about various aspects of many students' personal lives and feelings. The anonymity promised by the group's creator led to people feeling apparently unaccountable for their comments and actions and undoubtedly led to harsher content being published and shared. I am pleased to say that following an assembly, the group was deleted.

I am sure that I don't need to tell you about the danger of these various online behaviours. We all know that talking to strangers online, you may have no idea who is really at the other screen. However, many of our students believe that if they are talking to someone who apparently goes to another nearby school, or whose name they have heard before, it is someone they 'know'. It is vital that we impress upon our children the necessity of being certain about who you are talking to before you engage in discussion or share details about yourself with others online. Indeed, it is much safer if students only befriend online the people that they have actually, physically met in reality.

Essentially, I am asking you to be the gate-keeper to your child's internet activity. I see first-hand, far too regularly, the result of unchecked online access; from friendship falling-outs to more serious concerns. Please remember that your child(ren) are not the account holders for their mobile phones or internet: you are. As a result, you are responsible for what they are doing and accessing online.

In school, we are fortunate to have Mrs Tipping on our staff, who was previously a police officer and now leads on all things 'e-safety' in school. Please feel free to contact her on nicki.tipping@sirthomasfremantle.org if you need any advice relating to e-safety. Alternatively, if you are concerned by any online behaviour you find, you can also contact me on leah.martindale@sirthomasfremantle.org. Mrs Tipping has put together an advice sheet for you, which I attach with this letter.



Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you need to. I look forward to working with you to keep all of our students safe,

Yours sincerely,

Leah Martindale
Assistant Head / SENDCo

