CHILD SAFETY & SOCIAL MEDIA

Dear Families,

On Monday, we acknowledged Day for Daniel, Australia's largest child safety event of its kind. The day was dedicated to educating and empowering our students about how to stay safe in physical and online environments and support students who may have experienced unsafe behaviours. We are thrilled to acknowledge that much of the content reinforces and overlaps superbly with the Respectful Relationships lessons taught weekly across all year levels.

In addition, our senior students will be revisiting some educational content and support in relation to the appropriate and safe use of social media and technology.

Our cyber safety learning focuses on four key concepts across our senior school.

These four concepts are:
● Digital Citizenship (Privacy and Digital Footprint)
● Social and Emotional Learning (Communicating Respectfully)
● Specific Risks (Responding to and Reporting Unsafe Behaviours)
● Help-Seeking (Responding to and Reporting Unsafe Behaviours)

In recent weeks, it seems that an increasing number of students are accessing multiple social networking tools and spending a considerable amount of their time doing so. This level of engagement online increases the risks of cyberbullying, and sadness associated with being targeted or excluded from particular group chats, 'unfriended' or 'blocked'. Students also face exposure to inappropriate content that unnecessarily prompts them to assume more teenage behaviours.

As educators, we regularly talk to the students about the need to be careful online, in addition to helping students understand the ramifications of negative use of social media.

The 'Office of Children's eSafety Commissioner', a government body, has a wealth of parental information to guide you in monitoring your child's online activity. The following link will take you to those resources and information, and we strongly encourage you to visit this website:
https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents

It is often very difficult as parents to keep up to date with the latest trend in social media, and this resource will help you understand the nature, and uses, of the most current apps and websites.

We request that you talk to your children about their social media use and encourage them to use it in a responsible manner.

In 2023, we have scheduled for **Susan Mclean**, the leading international expert in this space to present to our parents and work with our students on cyber safety and safely navigating online platforms. Date to be confirmed in the coming days and strong expectations parents/carers attend this invaluable and powerful session.

Below are two key pieces of information we encourage all families to be aware of and consider when talking with their children.

Social Media Agreement

Student use of digital resources at school is guided by the Sacred Heart Acceptable Use Policy.

At Sacred Heart, we strongly recommend that children do not use social media/networking platforms until they have reached the required minimum age.

We respect your decisions and choices when it comes to your child's Internet usage, however, this agreement is to acknowledge that you accept full responsibility for monitoring your child's use of the Internet, Mobile Phones and Social Media outside of school hours.

For your reference you will find the minimum age requirements for a range of popular social websites below:

Kik 13+   **Instagram 13+**   **Snapchat 13+**

Twitter 13+   **Facebook 13+**   **Tik Tok 13+**

Digital Social Skills

By Catherine Gerhardt

Catherine Gerhardt is a dedicated advocate of critical thinking skills in children and young people. As a parent of school aged children she understands the commitments and challenges parents face ensuring they provide the right information to young people in a way that empowers them to develop their personal and social capabilities. Catherine is a certified training provider through the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner.

Article from Parenting Ideas website

Just as we teach children social skills for real life, there are important social skills for the digital world. As they travel through new social situations, including online, it is imperative that parents teach children to follow a few basic rules.

The internet is a portal into some of the most amazing places, and just like any new place we visit, we are likely to make a few social stumbles. If travelling the world, every culture you visit would have its own social nuances that you are likely to have to work your way around. It would be easy to misunderstand what others say or take offence to something that was not intended.

Young people, at the best of times, are still learning social rules and developing their critical thinking skills around collective interactions. Well-meaning personalities can make all kinds of mistakes when they enter this new online culture.

As parents we want to do whatever it takes to minimise the mistakes our children make online. Netiquette is a set of general guidelines for cyberspace behaviour. Here are some basic principles parents can use to help children solve their own 'netiquette' dilemmas.

Be kind
Remember the human behind every screen. Every user is an independent person with individual thoughts and feelings. It can be easy to misunderstand another person's intentions or even be rude to others when you are not interacting with them in person and given the grace of viewing facial expressions and emotions. Perhaps the best mantra we can go back to as parents is the golden rule of "Treat others how you would like to be treated." Developing empathy and trying to see that comment, post or photo from many different perspectives takes practice. How would you feel if someone said that to you? Treating others with respect is paramount. Yes, there may be times when you might have to stick up for yourself, however it needs to be done in a responsible and respectful way.

If you wouldn't do it there, don't do it here
Social standards apply to both online and offline spaces, and standards of online behaviour should be consistent with real life expectations. As parents we put many rules and expectations in place as to how we expect our children to behave in a public place. I know I expect my children to show respect, use their manners, help others out, practice kind language, etc. Online is the biggest public place your child will ever find themselves, which is all the more reason to work on exceeding those standards of behaviour.

Respect privacy

With the world wide web being a public place, privacy is paramount. Learning how to protect personal information and the importance of looking at a website's privacy policy can help develop skills around internet privacy. Asking for permission before creating accounts and downloading files, strategies for identifying scams and limiting the type of information kids give about themselves or others can help set a strong foundation for their digital lives.

Develop their internal filter

Parents may feel that they have some control over their child's use of technology and many use programs and apps that allow for monitoring and filtering content. Despite the best intentions, there are times when filters are re-set, not set up correctly or not even in place – for example when your child goes to their friend's house, gets online and no safety mechanisms have been established. What this means is that we need to help our children develop their internal filter, as this is the one they will always have and may need to rely on.

Teach them to do the right thing

Parents can nurture moral principles that will guide their children to stand up for their beliefs and act right even without us. Know what you stand for so that your child knows. Parents with clearly identified moral convictions are more likely to raise children that do the right thing. Pursue opportunities to look for moral issues and talk about them as they come up: from TV shows and news events to situations at home, school, and friends. Discuss with your child how you feel about the issue and why.

Be upstanding

There will be times online when your child will have to be brave and stand up for others, when they will have to go against social pressure to do what is right. When someone they know is being deliberately upset or harassed by another person, expect your child to move from bystander to upstander, because this is the right thing to do. In most cases many people contribute to the cyberbullying. Many know about the situation, but choose not to get involved. Encourage your child to stand up, speak up and act up against online abuse. They can support the target by letting them know they are there and provide empathy. Encourage your child to report what is happening to a trusted adult; someone who they believe will listen and has the skills, desire, and authority to help.

THINK

Using the THINK rule can go a long way in practicing digital social skills. It is a checklist of questions that children must go through before they post or comment online. Is it True? Is it Helpful? Is it Inspiring? Is it Necessary? Is it Kind? Created to emphasise care online, it applies to real world engagement as well.

These simple rules apply all along the developmental spectrum. They also give us a clear understanding of what we can do as parents, to help our children manage a positive digital reputation

If you have any questions or concerns about your child, please don't hesitate to contact your child's classroom teacher or a member of the leadership team.

Yours Sincerely,

Simon Collis and the Yr.5/6 Team