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**Staying Safe Online**

Dear Parents and Carers,

During these unprecedented times it is more important than ever that we work together with you at home to ensure a safe environment for learning, including online, for our children. We will continue to ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to protect children when they are online in school but we also wanted to offer guidance to parents and carers about how you can implement safeguards at home to keep your children safe.

**Online safety away from school**

All staff who interact with children, including online, will continue to look out for signs that a child may be at risk. Any such concerns will be dealt with in accordance with the school’s Child Protection Policy and where appropriate referrals will still be made to children’s social care and, as required, the police.

Merrill Academy will ensure that any use of online learning tools and systems are in line with privacy and data protection/GDPR requirements.

* When asking children to research subjects, specific websites will be signposted.
* All work will be presented via the school website or Ed lounge.
* When making contact with children, no staff will share their private emails with parents or children.
* Children will be encouraged, as is normal practice, to report anything that worries them to a trusted adult.

We understand that during this period of school closure our children will be spending more time than usual online and parents may not be as engaged as they usually are as they try to balance work deadlines with childcare. Increased ‘screen time’ means that it is more important than ever that we signpost ways in which parents and carers can keep their children safe.

**Below are some links and resources that may help you to do so.**

I highly recommend the YouTube clips that highlight the importance of engaging with their child/s online lives during this time. A link to the first clip can be found below

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhLWwQ4Ay5s>

There are other clips that cover issues such as:

* parental controls (and how to set them),
* apps have seen a surge in popularity since the pandemic
* age specific information aimed at 0-5's, 6 - 11's and over 11's

Other useful resources include:

* Internet matters - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

* London Grid for Learning - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online

<https://www.lgfl.net/default.aspx>

* Net-aware - for support for parents and careers from the NSPCC
* <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>
* Parent info - for support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
* <https://parentinfo.org/>
* Thinkuknow - for advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online
* <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>