## King Henry VIII School Pastoral Letter – Online Safety

**Dr MB Cuthbert (Deputy Head/DSL)**
**21 October 2022**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In my role of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for King Henry VIII School, I must take responsibility for the online safety of all our pupils. Online safety is very difficult to address and monitor. We work through many aspect of online safety in our PSHE programme but that is not enough. As a school, we rely on the parents/guardians of all our pupils to support us when addressing this important topic.

**Mandatory Guidance**

All institutions who work with children have a duty to apply the guidance found in a document called Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022. Page 35 of this guidance states that it is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. An effective whole school approach to online safety empowers a school to protect and educate pupils, students, and staff in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns where appropriate.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable and ever evolving but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

**Content**: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism.

**Contact**: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.

**Conduct**: online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying, and

**Commerce**: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams.

We are required to have a clear policy on the use of mobile and smart technology. Amongst other things, this does reflect the fact many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (i.e. 3G, 4G and 5G). This access means some children, whilst at school, sexually harass, bully, and control others via their mobile and smart technology, share indecent images consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content.

**Mobile Phones and Smart Watches**

How we manage access to the internet via a mobile phone or smart watch  is described in our school Behaviour Policy which can be found on the King Henry VIII Website and the link is here.

If a mobile phone/smartwatch is required for added safety or security in journeying to and from school, they must, **on arrival at school**, be turned off and either

- Kept in the pupil's/student's school bag;

- Or placed in the pupil's/student's locker.

Pupils/students should not use mobile phones, smartwatches, headphones and airpods, during the course of the school day, after entering the school site and at any time during the school day.  **No responsibility for the loss/damage of a mobile phone or electronic device will be accepted by the School.**

Pupils should assume that mobile phones/smartwatches are **NOT** allowed on school trips and visits, unless a specific instruction to the contrary has been issued.

*Sixth Form students may carry their phone/smartwatch with them but it must be switched off and not visible on the main site.  Sixth Form students may only use their phone or electronic devices in the social area of the Sixth Form Centre.*

If a mobile phone or smartwatch is seen **out** (rather than seen in bag or pocket), it may be confiscated and handed to Reception to be collected at 4pm. **Having a mobile phone or smartwatch visible, whether a student is using one or not, results in a Tuesday detention**. Mobile Phones and smartwatches may not be used between when a pupil/student enters the school site in the morning and 4pm. Please note that **they should only be used outside school buildings after 4pm**, if needed to check travel arrangements home.

**Online Safety**

In the past year, there is a social media platform, called **DISCORD**, that has caused much concern and several of our students have been subjected to significant child-on-child cyberbullying abuse through this platform. The use of this platform is unregulated, and we have found that it develops a culture of disrespect towards protective characteristics. We need your help to stop our students being abused by their peers and keep them safe online.
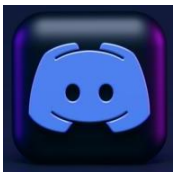


**What is Discord?**

Discord is a free app for mobile and PC that lets people chat via text, voice, or video in real time. Combining the internet-calling features of Skype with Reddit-like discussion boards, it's broadened from gamers-only to a social networking site for communities of all types, including those with non-gaming interests like anime, TV series, music, and more. It can also be an easy-to-use group-chatting tool for friends.

**How it works?**

The platform works by using servers. These are set up with a particular focus or theme as a way for people to meet up online to discuss and exchange images, links and information. These servers offer both text and voice communication via a microphone on the device you use.

Users can be invited to servers or find links online to access them. The person who set up the server usually sets some ground rules about who it is for and the expected behaviour. They can also provide strict guidelines for filtering out explicit content and ensuring their moderators' accounts are secure. We have found, due to peer pressure that student moderators struggle to uphold and apply the strict guidelines.

**Guidance from the [National Online Safety](#) Website:**

# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# DISCORD

**AGE RATING**
**13+**
Servers and channels marked as 'NSFW' require users to be 18 or older to join.

Discord is a free app which allows users to communicate in real time via text, video or voice chat. Available on desktop and mobile devices, it was originally designed to help gamers cooperate – but has evolved into a more general networking platform for a range of online communities, discussing topics like TV series, music, Web3 and more. Discord is organised around closed groups, referred to as 'servers'. To join a server, users must be invited or provided with a unique link. It's a space for users to interact with friends, meet others with shared interests and collaborate privately online — but it's also a place where young people can be exposed to risks if the right precautions aren't taken.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

## CYBERBULLYING

Discord's easy accessibility and connectivity, unfortunately, makes it an ideal place for cyberbullying to occur – especially as audio and video streams disappear once they've ended, meaning that bullying could take place without leaving any evidence. Closed groups can also be created, giving young people the opportunity to exclude their peers or send cruel messages without adult oversight.

## DIFFICULT TO MODERATE

Like many private communication apps, Discord's real-time messaging can be difficult to control. The system enables content moderation through each individual server – so different groups can set their own rules for what's acceptable, and some groups may not monitor for unsuitable content. Anything that happens in an audio or video stream is also virtually untraceable once the stream has concluded.

## INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Discord mainly hosts private groups, making it easier for unsuitable or explicit content to be shared on channels. Pornography, racism and inappropriate language can be found in some groups. Server owners are required to add an age-restriction gate to channels where 18+ content is being shared – but this solution isn't foolproof, as the platform doesn't always verify users' ages when they sign up.

## ACCESSIBLE TO PREDATORS

On many chat platforms, users can lie about their age or true identity – and Discord is no exception. Predators have attempted to abuse the platform by using it to contact and communicate with underage users – by initially chatting with a child on an age-appropriate channel, for example. While Discord *has* improved its safety settings, some users will still try to bypass them for malicious reasons.

## CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Discord *does* have strict Terms of Service and Community Guidelines to protect its users – but, sadly, not everyone adheres to them. Criminal activity including grooming, hate speech, harassment, exploitative content, doxxing and extremist or violent material have all been found on Discord servers over the last two years. In 2020, Discord received almost 27,000 reports of illegal activity on the platform.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### REVIEW SAFETY SETTINGS

Discord has a series of safety settings, enabling users to choose who can direct message them or send them friend requests. Your child's experience on Discord will be much safer if the app's privacy and safety settings are configured to only allow messages or friend requests from server members. This will minimise the chances of potential predators from outside the group contacting them.

### EXPLAIN AGE FILTERING

While Discord requires users to be at least 13 to sign up, many servers geared towards older users are flagged as NSFW (not safe for work), which indicates they probably contain material that's inappropriate for children. It can be easy to click through settings without properly reviewing them, so ensure your child understands why age filtering is important and that it's there to protect them.

### SCREEN OUT EXPLICIT CONTENT

In the privacy and safety settings, Discord users are offered the ability to filter direct messages for inappropriate content: a setting that should be enabled if your child uses the platform. Discord automatically tries to flag *images* that are explicit, but the setting must be manually enabled for text. If a young user is sent explicit content in a direct message, Discord will scan and (if necessary) delete it.

### MONITOR ONLINE ACTIVITY

It's wise to regularly review your child's activity on Discord. This can include checking their safety settings to ensure they're correctly enabled, talking about which servers they've joined and reviewing some of their friends and direct messages. Ask if anything has made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Things can change quickly online, so plan routine check-ins and follow up frequently.

### DISCUSS GOOD ONLINE BEHAVIOUR

The anonymity offered by the internet often leads people to communicate more openly online and behave differently than they would at school or home. It's crucial to bear in mind, though, that every internet user is still a real person. Talk to your child about the severe and lasting consequences that cyberbullying or exchanging inappropriate material online can have in the real world.

### HAVE CANDID CONVERSATIONS

It can sometimes be awkward to discuss topics like grooming, pornography, racism or explicit content with your child – but it's important to ensure they're aware of the harms these things can pose. Talking openly about these subjects is a great way to help your child feel more comfortable about coming to you if they experience an unwanted encounter on Discord (or anywhere else online).

**Please find further information about Discord here:**

https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/esafety-news/parents-guide-to-discord-on-how-your-kids-can-use-it-safely/

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/parents-ultimate-guide-to-discord

https://saferinternet.org.uk/blog/discord-security-settings-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers

**Guidance on social media and internet use within the home.**

You only need to google for help on how to manage the social media use of your children and the internet produces an array of information and support. There are a number of particularly good sources I would like to draw your attention to:

Internet Matters: https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/social-media-advice-hub/

NSPCC: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/

Think u Know: https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

Young Minds: https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/a-z-guide/social-media/

The greatest challenge you will face as a parent is to maintain your expectations with respect to the social media use of your child as well as reigning them in when things get out of hand.

**How can you help us?**

We need your vigilance, help and support to ensure that our pupils demonstrate respect for others on social media and concentrate on their learning, rather than spend hours sharing and creating gossip that can be extremely damaging to the wellbeing of our pupils. Our PSHE programme for all year groups addresses online safety. Some pupils really listen and take on board what we teach them, others, however, continue to push the boundaries both morally and legally. We do find that pupils who push the boundaries, often experience more freedoms with mobile use within the home. We always encourage parents to not allow pupils access to social media when they are undertaking schoolwork or going to bed. May I challenge you to encourage your whole family to charge all devices in a separate room such as the lounge or kitchen overnight. Ensure that you have the appropriate parental controls on all devices as well as your Wi-Fi connection.

**How can going online affect our wellbeing?**

There are lots of positives for children being online, however there can be negatives too. For some it can become overwhelming trying to keep up with friends, and the pressure can mount.

Many things can impact our online wellbeing, and you can take control of the choices made to reduce any negativity. Being aware of the impact of being online, just like you would be aware of the impact of offline activities, is the first step to managing your children's online wellbeing.

We can:

- manage the content that our children see,

- ensure interactions are suitable

- and manage how long they're online, in balance with other activities.

There are several things you can do to help support a child with their wellbeing online, including specific apps, and looking at settings.

**Have regular conversations with your child**

Give children the chance to talk about what they're experiencing online, what apps and sites they use and who they're talking to. Talking regularly, like you would about their day at school, will help your child feel relaxed and mean that when they do have any worries, they're more likely to come and speak to you. Remind them that it isn't just you that they can talk to – another trusted adult or a Childline counsellor might be easier sometimes.

Fall-outs with friends can affect children online, just as they do offline, and communicating online can lead to misunderstandings with friends. Encourage your child to look at the Childline website, which has lots of great advice articles:

- [Feeling good on social media](#)

- [Coping with stress](#)

- [Worries about the world](#)

Childline's [Calm zone](#) is also packed with tools and activities to help children de-stress and discover new techniques that can support them when they're feeling down. Young people can also talk to each other about their worries on the [Childline message boards](#).

Consider that what children see online is often through a filter. It isn't just images and videos that can be [filtered or edited](#), but bodies and lives too.


Many thanks for reading my pastoral letter,

Dr MB Cuthbert

[MBC@BKHS.org.uk](mailto:MBC@BKHS.org.uk)

# Safeguarding & Wellbeing at KHVIII School for STUDENTS
## (2022/2023)

**All students can expect the following from KHVIII Staff:**

- Vigilance
- Understanding and action
- Stability
- Respect

- Information and Engagement
- Explanation
- Support
- Advocacy

If you are WORRIED or are worried about a friend, share your concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), a trusted staff member, My Concern Boxes or use the 'I Need Help' button on the School's Intranet.

## DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEADS & PUPIL WELLBEING SUPPORT



| Dr Cuthbert Deputy Head DSL | Mrs Cadwallader School Nurse DDSL | Mr Dearden Headmaster DDSL | Mrs Kaczur Assistant Head DDSL | Mrs Brindley SENCo DDSL | Mrs Tromans Pupil Wellbeing Mentor | Mrs Dowding Deputy Head Student Leadership | Rev Slavic School Chaplain |

### Emergency Help
**Call 999 if you are at immediate risk**
*NHS Mental Health Crisis service*: call **0300 200 0011** free 24/7 service
https://youngminds.org.uk/
Free **text YM to 85258**
**24/7 crisis support**
**Samaritans call free on 116 123**
https://www.childline.org.uk/
**Call free on 0800 1111**

### Mental Health Support
https://www.kooth.com/ **Free, safe and anonymous support from trained counsellors**
*RISE (for children and young people)* **call 08081 966798 (select option 2) Crisis & Home Treatment team**
*Dimensions Tool* **offers immediate tailored self-help support and signposting to local services.**
*IAPT Website* **Coventry & Warwickshire Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service Tel: 024 7667 1090**

### Online Safety and Other Support
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/
to REPORT abuse
**NSPCC** Call for free: **0808 800 5000**

https://www.childnet.com/
https://www.supportline.org.uk/problems/internet-safety/
https://nationalonlinesafety.com/

All employed Staff who are safe to work with children wear a BLACK BKHS Lanyard
All Governors who have been DBS checked wear a BLUE BKHS Lanyard

GREEN lanyards are worn by visitors that are allowed to be on site without supervision

PINK lanyards are worn by visitors that are NOT allowed to be on site without supervision: report to reception