Dear Parents/Carers

Welcome to the twentieth edition of the safeguarding newsletter from the Goldington Academy safeguarding team. Our aim is to bring you all the latest, relevant help and advice on issues that we feel will be of importance to you.

In this issue, the main focus is on **'Discord'** and **Social Media Influencers**. We teach students the importance of online safety through our computing curriculum and through our wider assembly programme with visiting speakers e.g. Bedfordshire Police.

Safeguarding children is everybody's responsibility. If you have concerns about the safety or welfare of any child, please do not hesitate to speak to a member of staff.

We hope that you will find the information in this newsletter useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information or support with any of the topics raised.

Yours sincerely

Mr W Atkinson
Assistant Headteacher
Designated Safeguarding Lead

Discord

What is 'Discord'?

Discord is a social networking app used by gamers to chat to each other. There can be in app purchases through Discord's premium subscription service. The minimum age to access Discord is 13. The Apple App store rates it as 17+.

Discord is made up of servers, which are spaces for groups to chat, upload files and share images etc. Anybody can set up a server and they can either be public or private.

Users can video call and send direct messages to other individuals or groups. Children who play online games such as Fortnite may use Discord to chat about the game (rather than the game's own chat facility).

Further information
Discord have created this article, which outlines four steps to creating a safer account, including how to:
- Choose a secure password
- Set privacy settings
- Block users
- Set up 2 factor authentication
- Manage friend request settings

Four Steps to a Safer Account | Discord Safety

Social Media Influencers

What is a Social Media Influencer?

A Social Media Influencer is a prominent figure on a social media platform, such as YouTube and Instagram. Influencers usually have very high number of followers, often millions of followers from across the globe. Influencers share their opinions and ideas and may be paid to advertise or promote products through their account. Whist there are some positive influencers, there are some that choose to share their own opinions, which could be misogynistic or racist. These opinions are often expressed or interpreted as fact by young people, who might not be as able to critically analyse the information they are exposed to. It is important to talk to young people about the spread of misinformation online and how we should fact check and critically analyse what we see and hear online and to seek support from trusted adults if they are concerned about, or confused by information they might encounter.

Often, what is viewed on social media platforms is influenced by algorithms. They predict what type of content users are more likely to interact with. Whilst there are benefits of algorithms, it can mean that once users start looking at certain content, their social media feed can become more aligned with that opinion, so they do not see a balanced picture and are only exposed to one particular viewpoint.

You can find out more here: https://www.childnet.com/blog/algorithms/

Further information

The NSPCC have created an article detailing what you need to know about online influencers. You can read it here:

The influencers of influencers | NSPCC

Top Tips for Encouraging Children to Choose Respect

https://nationalcollege.com/guides/choose-respect

Even among adults, it can be all too common to see disputes and differing opinions grow extremely heated, which is rarely helpful to anyone. When emotions run high, it can be easy to forget yourself and perhaps even say something you did not mean, hurting feelings or escalating the situation further.

For children, it is just as important to avoid this kind of behaviour whenever possible; without the necessary guidance, however, they could struggle to identify any disrespectful behaviour, let alone recognise what they can do differently. This guide offers you expert advice on teaching children and young people to choose respect when interacting with their peers, helping to create an environment based on empathy and tolerance.

http://nationalonlinesafety.com/enrol/goldington-academy

Once you have registered, you will be able to access the "Online Safety for Parents and Carers' course" and National Online Safety's Resources (which includes a wide range of online platform guides on the latest social media channels and games). This aims to help empower parents with the knowledge to protect their children from the dangers of the internet.

Early Help Service

The Early Help service is made up of six Early Help professionals who support schools to co-ordinate early help for pupils and their families. The Early Help service includes the following teams:

- Adolescent response team
- Early Help Hub
- Education Welfare
- Family Information Service
- Family Support Hub
- Inclusion Support
- Parenting Team
- Strengthening Families Team

For further information, please visit **Early Help Assessment - Overview | Bedford Borough Council** or speak to any member of the school's safeguarding team.