Dear Parents/Carers,

Use of social media and the internet

It is becoming increasingly apparent that how young people communicate and use social media is a real concern across the United Kingdom.

Snapchat, Whatsapp, Ask.FM, Instagram, Twitter as well as the internet in general are all open and instant to teenagers and younger children, and bullying, exploitation and the ease of taking, sending and receiving images are an increasing issue that adults must face up to. As adults we may not understand how some of these media work, but without doubt they can be harmful, and the negative effects on those of school age are increasing.

This is a national problem, and at Westfield we are increasingly seeing certain issues arising, such as cyber bullying and indecent images being sent on a sadly regular basis. Some of our young people are vulnerable when it comes to the use of the internet and we believe that we all need to be aware of this and monitor it. Whilst the vast majority of this does happen out of school, these are our students and we want to protect and support them

At the start of next term we will be holding a series of Assemblies with the Police to raise student awareness of the negative effects of social media use.

We also have a number of recommendations, taken from the NSPCC (https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/)
- *Talking to your child is one of the best ways to keep them safe. You can also use parental controls on social networks, online games and browsers and on both hardware and software that can filter or monitor what your child can see.*
- *Preventing your children from using the internet or mobile phones won't keep them safe in the long run, so it's important to have conversations that help your child understand how to stay safe and what to do if they ever feel scared or uncomfortable.*

Also our own recommendations would be;
1. Have the conversation about phones, the internet and social media early and often
2. Explore online together; talk to them about the possible dangers
3. Be aware of who your child is talking to on-line
4. Set rules and agree boundaries to avoid prolonged internet/social media time while on their own. For example while in their bedroom
5. Make sure that content is age-appropriate
6. Use parental controls to filter, restrict, monitor and report content
7. Check they know how to use privacy settings and reporting tools.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact your son/daughters form tutor.

Yours sincerely

Mr T Body
Headteacher