

JMI/JJA

14 November 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

**RE: YOUR CHILD'S DEVICE, THEIR SAFETY, ESSENTIAL STEPS FOR PARENTS/CARERS**

Whilst the use of social media lets our teens create online identities, chat with others and build social networks, we are becoming increasingly concerned with the unhealthy use of social media by some of our students.

In recent weeks, we have been advised of several concerning issues in the local area, including:

- Students being added to random WhatsApp groups where explicit pornographic content is shared.
- Gang activity, both local and from outside Thurrock, involving approaches to students with the intent of manipulating them into opening bank accounts or participating in illegal activities.
- Instances of individuals approaching children and requesting indecent images.
- Students allowing others access to their devices to log into gaming apps and use their accounts.

As an Academy, we strongly encourage you, as parents and carers, to regularly check your child's smart devices, keeping an eye on the following:

**1. Messages and Social Media:**

- Look for any evidence of cyberbullying, whether your child is sending or receiving it.
- Check for inappropriate content in messages or social media interactions.
- Monitor for any signs of mental health struggles, such as language that suggests self-harm, isolation, or depression.
- Be aware of potential safety risks in communications with strangers or suspicious accounts.
- Look out for group chats your child has been added into.

**2. Browser History:**

- Review your child's browser history for inappropriate websites or content related to violence or self-harm as well as any sexual based websites.
- Look for searches indicating any of the above.

**3. Apps Installed:**

- Check for inappropriate apps, such as those for hiding content or apps not age-appropriate.
- Be mindful of gaming or gambling apps that could affect attention or impulse control.
- Further information can be found here: <https://www.theglc-gatewayacademy.org.uk/page/?title=Online+Safety&pid=180>.

**4. Photos and Videos:**

- Review saved media for inappropriate or explicit content.
- Check for photos or videos that may indicate risky behaviour or bullying. Look for anything that may indicate your child carrying cash.

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The GLC Trust is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales (Registered Number 5853746). Registered office at The Gateway Academy, Marshfoot Road, Tilbury, Essex RM16 4LU.

Chief Executive Officer: Viki Reid.

The GLC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff, volunteers and visitors to share this commitment.



**5. Location and Safety Apps:**

- Ensure that location services are on, and review any tracking or monitoring apps to enhance safety.

**6. Digital Wellbeing and Screen Time:**

- Monitor screen time to see how much time your child spends on different apps.
- Look for any signs of excessive usage, as this can be linked to mental health concerns.

**7. Settings and Security:**

- Ensure security settings are enabled, like PINs or biometric locks, to prevent unauthorised access. Also ensure you have full access to your child's device.
- Check for unusual or unauthorised profiles or accounts on the device.

**8. Recent Activity:**

- Review recent activity to get a sense of your child's day-to-day usage patterns.

At The Gateway Academy, we work diligently to educate students on these dangers but your support in monitoring your child's device usage is essential. If you need support with any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Gateway Safeguarding at: [cp-gateway@theglc.org.uk](mailto:cp-gateway@theglc.org.uk).

Thank you for your continued assistance in keeping our students safe.

Yours sincerely



Mr J Moruzzi  
VICE PRINCIPAL