Dear parents and carers,

As we are all set of to enjoy a very well-deserved holiday, I wanted to share some advice regarding the use of online games and platforms. Undoubtedly, children's screen time will increase during their holiday and, as we live in a digital age, this is to be expected; however, we want to ensure this increase is a safe one.

Since returning from lockdown, all staff have had many conversations regarding online safety and children were very honest about the apps and games they have been using. This honesty is paramount to ensure their safety online is well-protected and we were all very proud of how open and honest they were and are.

From these conversations, several apps, games and online platforms were discussed by the children. The attached guidance relates to the areas which were mostly talked about to help inform you and support your child in making safe and suitable decisions whilst being online.

Online channels are an important and exciting place for children but there is no doubt that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues. According to recent data released from National Online Safety, 43% of children are speaking to strangers online, 36% of 8 year olds are playing games aimed at ages 18+ and there has been a 70% increase of bullying and hate speech since lockdown.

It is vital that all children are as safe as possible, including online, which is why, rather than removing digital devices, we look to create an environment where the children can ask and answer questions enabling to create a sound understanding of their online behaviour. To do this, we advise asking them to give you a demo of their favourite, app, game or site; get to know the safety settings on their favourite app, sites and games and create a family agreement to create some rules together.

Further support regarding these areas can be found via www.net-aware.org.uk specifically, https://www.net-aware.org.uk/news/getting-to-know-what-your-child-is-doing-online/