Internet Safety Policy

The purpose of this document is to clarify the role and responsibilities of Sutherland Education guardians and homestay hosts with regard to the online safety of the children in their care. (See our data protection policy for the role of Sutherland Education administrative staff with regard to managing E-safety)

Children can access the Internet in many different ways, using a variety of devices including desktop computers, laptops, mobile phones and games consoles. New technologies are continually enhancing communication, the sharing of information, learning, social interaction and leisure activities. Current and emerging technologies used in and outside of school include:

• Websites;
• Email and instant messaging;
• Blogs;
• Social networking sites;
• Chat rooms;
• Music / video downloads;
• Gaming sites;
• Text messaging and picture messaging;
• Video calls;
• Podcasting;
• Online communities via games consoles; and
• Mobile internet devices such as smart phones and tablets.

It is the duty of Sutherland Education to provide guidance to our guardians and homestay hosts regarding safe use of the Internet regardless of how and where they access it. The Internet is an integral part of our lives and children need to learn how to use it safely and effectively; ultimately they need to take responsibility for their own safety. The overarching emphasis of this policy, therefore, is to provide guidance on how to help children achieve this.

Guidelines for Guardians Host Families

Communication and Internet Safety

Students expect wireless access to the internet but it is important that you limit and monitor their use carefully. Please provide your guardianship student with the wireless password when they first arrive. The internet is used for academic work and also to stay in touch with their family and friends during the holiday period. We are unable to place students in host families who have no internet access. Students are told not to download large files, such as films, games and music, as this can lead to problems with your normal access but it is very difficult to monitor this; please notify us if you are experiencing difficulties. Host families should feel free to switch off the internet if it is being used excessively or at unsociable hours.

 Please ensure that you have adequate parental controls in place on your internet but the student will need access to Skype and social media sites such as Instagram and Facebook. In terms of time controls, please do as you would with your own children and use common sense; the student should not be allowed to stay up past their agreed bedtime using the internet.

Students will usually phone home using their mobile phone or Skype; there is no need for them to use your landline for international calls. We recommend that you agree a time with your guardianship student when it is acceptable for them to receive or make telephone calls.

Online Abuse

For further details of the information below go to the NSPCC website:

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/grooming/

It doesn't matter whether abuse happens online or offline, a child can experience harm and long-lasting damage as a result of abuse.

Cyberbullying can make children and young people feel more frightened and helpless than bullying because they feel like they can't escape. It can also have a similar impact as bullying causing school failure, depression, anxiety and other mental health problems (Munro, 2011).

We don't yet know much about effects of grooming or sexual abuse experienced online. But we do know that sexual abuse can have devastating effects which can last into adulthood.

What to look for:

The NSPCC has put together a description of the sorts of signs and behaviours to look out for with regard to online abuse:

- withdrawn
- suddenly behaves differently
- anxious
- clingy
- depressed
- aggressive
- problems sleeping
- eating disorders
- wets the bed
- soils clothes
- takes risks
- misses school
- changes in eating habits
- obsessive behaviour
- nightmares
- drugs
- alcohol
- self-harm
- thoughts about suicide

A child may become secretive about their online use. Always check the details and confirm with the other party, if a student in your care is meeting with someone. See information below on Grooming:

Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.

Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age.

Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse.

The signs of grooming aren't always obvious and groomers will often go to great lengths not to be identified.

If a child is being groomed they may:

- be very secretive, including about what they are doing online
- have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- go to unusual places to meet friends
- have new things such as clothes or mobile phones that they can't or won't explain
- have access to drugs and alcohol.

In older children, signs of grooming can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour, but you may notice unexplained changes in behaviour or personality, or inappropriate sexual behaviour for their age.

Secrets and intimidation to control children:

Once they have established trust, groomers will exploit the relationship by isolating the child from friends or family and making the child feel dependent on them. They will use any means of power or control to make a child believe they have no choice but to do what they want.

Groomers may introduce 'secrets' as a way to control or frighten the child. Sometimes they will blackmail the child, or make them feel ashamed or guilty, to stop them telling anyone about the abuse.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is an increasingly common form of bullying behaviour which happens on social networks, games and mobile phones. Cyberbullying can include spreading rumours about someone, or posting nasty or embarrassing messages, images or videos.

Children may know who's bullying them online – it may be an extension of offline peer bullying - or they may be targeted by someone using a fake or anonymous account. It's easy to be anonymous online and this may increase the likelihood of engaging in bullying behaviour.

Cyberbullying includes:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'trolling' - the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

Social Media Sites

Some of the most popular social media sites include the following:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Google+
- YouTube
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- Tumblr

Guardians and Homestay hosts should make sure that children in their care are aware of the following:

- Do not let peer pressure or what other people are doing on these sites convince you to do something you are not comfortable with.

- Be wary of publishing any identifying information about yourself – either in your profile or in your posts – such as phone numbers, pictures of your home, workplace or school, your address or birthday.

- Pick a user name that does not include any personal information. For example, "joe_glasgow" or "jane_liverpool" would be bad choices.

- Set up a separate email account to register and receive mail from the site. That way if you want to close down your account/page, you can simply stop using that mail account. Setting up a new email account is very simple and quick to do using such providers as Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail or gmail.

- Use strong passwords.

- Keep your profile closed and allow only your friends to view your profile.

- What goes online stays online. Do not say anything or publish pictures that might later cause you or someone else embarrassment.

- Never post comments that are abusive or may cause offence to either individuals or groups of society.

- Be aware of what friends post about you, or reply to your posts, particularly about your personal details and activities.

- Remember that many companies routinely view current or prospective employees' social networking pages, so be careful about what you say, what pictures you post and your profile.
- Don't post your holiday dates - or family photos while you are away - as social networking sites are a favourite research tool for the modern burglar.
- Learn how to use the site properly. Use the privacy features to restrict strangers' access to your profile. Be guarded about who you let join your network.
- Be on your guard against phishing scams, including fake friend requests and posts from individuals or companies inviting you to visit other pages or sites.
- If you do get caught up in a scam, make sure you remove any corresponding likes and app permissions from your account.
- Ensure you have effective and updated antivirus/antispyware software and firewall running before you go online.

Exploitation online

When sexual exploitation happens online, young people may be persuaded, or forced, to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- have sexual conversations by text or online.

Abusers may threaten to send images, video or copies of conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity.

Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the sexual abuse has stopped.