Principal: Mr C Walsh BA (HONS), MA, NPQH   **Chair of Governors:** Mr S Hall

WH/RNM/INTERNETAPPS

14th November 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

Boston Spa Academy is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet, and we are proactive in our support and guidance for young people. Despite this, we have some concerns about how a few young people are using some online tools to communicate across the internet, particularly in their use of social media applications, in particular the use of:

- Instagram- an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service which enables its users to take pictures and videos whilst sharing them on a variety of social networking platforms. Adults unknown to the student are able to message them. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.

- Facebook- a social networking site. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.

- WhatsApp- An instant messaging app for smartphones. The user agreement requires the user to be aged 16 years or older.

- Snapchat- An instant messaging service where posts can be deleted after thirty seconds. However users are able to record these posts by screen 'grabbing' or taking a picture of the post on their phone. You are required to be 13 years old before you create an account.

- Sarahah- Commonly referred to as 'Sahara' this is an online site where users can post anonymous messages or respond to anonymous messages. The App Store recommends users to be aged 17 or above.

Each of these tools enable the user to send photos and videos to friends or people who they do not know. They also allow the creation of 'groups' which other people join. In this situation all the information is shared with anyone who is in the group so privacy is lost. In some cases strangers have been added to the group, and this presents a particular threat to young people.

Our [website](#) includes guidance on staying safer on line, and this is taught as a routine part of our ICT courses, with the message starting in Year 7 and revisited routinely in our curriculum and in assemblies running up to [Safer Internet Day](#), however, with increasingly changing technologies it is really important that we make sure that young people understand how to keep themselves safe. We strongly advise the following steps are taken in order to safeguard your child:

1. Monitor your daughter or son's internet use, remembering this can be though tablet, computer, mobile phone or games console.

2. Talk about safe and appropriate online behaviour, making sure they understand the following; that they should
- Communicate only with people they know
- Never share personal information
- Keep their profile secure and private
- Never to post offensive or inappropriate images
- Never to post anything which could reveal their identity, including their school uniform.
- Never to post anything they would not want their parents or teachers to see. This includes the content of private messages being shared online.
- Never to agree to meet someone they only know online.
- Always tell someone, or use the ['Tell Us'](#) on the website if they feel threatened or someone upsets them by the use of social media.

The CEOP [Think U Know](#) website is a source of valuable information about keeping your child safe online, we commend it to you.

I hope you find this letter useful and if you require any further guidance please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Spink, our designated safeguarding officer, or if you wish to raise a matter urgently, you can use the ['Tell Us'](#) button on the school website.

Yours sincerely

Mrs N Ryder
Assistant Principal