**Dear Parent/Carer,**

**Internet safety and the use of Social Media - At Newlands, we are committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet and as such we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a growing concern, due to the increase in inappropriate use of snapchat, Instagram, musical.ly and other texting and picture/ video sharing apps and sites.**

***Many of the issues that have been brought to our attention recently have involved the use of:***

* **OoVoo which is a video and messaging app, it allows video chats of up to 12 people at one time. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**
* **Skype - a video and messaging app. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**
* **Instagram - an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service which enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms. 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.**
* **Whats App – An instant messaging app for smartphones. The user agreement requires users to be age 16 or older.**
* **Musical.ly music which is a video community is a social network for sharing user-generated music videos – You can upload videos, remix others' work, or browse content created by other users and by more famous recording artists. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.** **Recommended for ages 16 and older.**
* **Snapchat which is a messaging application for sharing moments. You can take a photo or a video, add a caption or doodle and share these through a snapchat story.**
* **Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages (tweets) You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**

**In compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), most of these social network, picture and video sharing applications *have an age restriction of 13* and therefore none of our pupils should be using these.**

**We are aware, however, that some children are using some of the above social media apps and therefore must have given a false age in order to create an account. As with any social media account, it is vitally important that they are set up carefully and with the necessary security settings. Children are often creating ‘group chats’ and others are joining these. This means that all information is shared with anyone who is in the group so privacy is lost and in some cases strangers have been added to the group.**

**We understand that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the ways that our children are using new and ever changing technologies. Our children are immersed in a society that has become dependent on powerful computers, including smart phones, iPads, interactive online games and virtual communities. Websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Skype, Whats App, Viber, musical.ly and OoVoo, to name but a few, offer fantastic opportunities for communication and social connections, however they are created with their audience in mind especially sites such as Facebook and Instagram.**

**Through lessons provided at school, we do our best to provide our children with the awareness and knowledge they need in order to recognise and avoid dangerous situations and to respond appropriately. However, it is only through a collaborative effort between parents/carers and teachers that we will succeed in creating responsible and safe cyber-citizens. You are invited to attend next week’s e-safety assembly where our children will demonstrate their understanding of the online world; its benefits and its risks. During next week, the children will be participating in e –safety discussions, lessons and activities and we will be showing age-appropriate video content supplied by CEOP and childnet to allow the children to experience different scenarios.**

**Thank you for your support with this matter,**

**Mrs Castledine**