

STAYING SAFE ONLINE DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON

During the Christmas period many young people will receive gifts such as laptops, tablets, smartphones and gaming consoles.

As responsible digital parents it may be a great opportunity to set boundaries to support the safe use of these devices. Below is a checklist of useful advice as a starting point:

- ✓ **Talk to your child about the online world.** What do they like, what worries them and ask them if they know what to do if something goes wrong.
- ✓ **Consider parental controls.** You can set controls on smartphones, gaming consoles and can filter YouTube and Google etc.
- ✓ **Set privacy settings on social media.** Set privacy settings on social media accounts. For help on how to set any of the aforementioned parental controls or privacy settings, please visit the school website. The Digital Parenting magazine which offers step by step instructions can be viewed on the school website in the *Parent Zone* of the *Online Safety* web link.
- ✓ **Agree boundaries.** Agree how much the devices can be used, when can they go online and how long for. Set boundaries for the use of gaming consoles which can also connect to the Internet. Remember, just as you set boundaries for your son/daughters real world social life such as time to come home, time they can spend with their friends etc it is also wise to monitor and set boundaries for the virtual world they socialise in.
- ✓ **Don't be put off by technology.** Just consider what you would do if technology wasn't involved.
- ✓ **Check age ratings on games.** Allow your child to play age appropriate games.
- ✓ **Remember the positives.** Whilst the virtual world may have potential risks it can be a huge enjoyment for young people when used appropriately and responsibly. By educating ourselves and making young people aware of risks, what to do if they are worried and by keeping an open dialogue with your child the virtual world can offer immense benefits and opportunities. Please visit the school website on www.stthomasscentre.com and click on Parent Zone to find out more information and help with online safety.

*Wishing you a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year.*

