Dear Parents,

Internet safety is an issue that is taken very seriously by schools. When we become aware of situations to which parents should be alerted, it is important that we relay this information to our school community as speedily as possible. These issues serve as a timely reminder that, as adults, we need to be vigilant in supervising our children’s use of the internet. While the internet is a wonderful tool, it also poses a potentially dangerous risk to our children’s safety. As adults, it is our responsibility to supervise what our children access on the internet and, in particular, to whom they may be speaking.

We recently became aware of a site/app named KIK. From my understanding, KIK is a Facebook style of app where children can communicate, through message, to other people. The app can be uploaded on any device that has internet capacity/access. On advice from the department’s Safety and Security Directorate, we would discourage parents from letting their children use this site as it can potentially create a ‘back door’ access point to your child’s world and leave them vulnerable to unscrupulous people – scams and stranger danger.

The incident we are referring to did not occur at school but a teacher was alerted to it and the school responded accordingly, including advising the police and referring the matter to the Safety and Security Directorate. Thankfully, due to the parent’s support, the concern was stopped before it became a greater concern. Often, it is innocent things that can quickly escalate, if not for the sensible involvement of adults.

The following tips may prove of value to you as you navigate the computer world with your children. In addition to these tips, it is also important to remind parents that, by law, primary-aged children (under the age of 13) are not allowed to join Facebook. As we cannot be there every minute of every day to supervise computer usage, it is important to teach children to be sensible and careful users of the internet. Children need to be taught responsible behaviours when using computers and the internet; in the same way they are taught, as examples, to cross a road safely and to use a seatbelt in the car.

Ms McLeod
Principal
Keeping your kids safe online is easy with a few simple precautions.

1. Nothing replaces parental supervision and education for kids about cybersafety.

2. Set a technology curfew.

3. Remind your child to never give out identifying information such as your home address, school name or telephone number in a public message such as chat or newsgroups.

4. If your child posts photos online, use privacy settings to limit access to people they know well.

5. Remind your child that people don’t always tell the truth online, and they can’t take anything at face value.

6. Reassure your child that they can tell you anything, without fear of losing the laptop or internet access.

7. If they get a message or email that’s threatening or rude, they should ‘STOP, BLOCK, TELL’. First step is to tell your child to stop responding to the abuse and then block those people sending threatening or rude messages if they continue. Let your child know that if they are being bullied, or know someone else who is, they should tell a trusted adult.

8. Never click on any links that are contained in emails from people they don't know. As well as sexual content, they could contain a computer virus.

9. If you suspect your child has been contacted by a predator, try to save a copy of the chat log (or whatever form the contact takes) for evidence. Call Crime Stoppers 24-hour line 1800 333 000 to make a formal complaint.

10. Your child will be using computers and the technology for the rest of their lives – you're in the great position of being able to get them off to a safe, positive start.