

Linton Village College

ICT Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to update you on how students at LVC are able to access school-based online resources and e-mails from home, and to share some information and advice about ensuring that children use and access technology safely.

The LVC Student Website and E-mails

All students can go onto the LVC student website by following the link on the school's main website at <http://www.lvc.org>. Once they are on the student site, they will also be able to link to their school e-mail account online. Students who are currently able to access 'MyLP' from home can continue to use this, but should find it quicker to go to the student website and their e-mail account directly via the LVC website.

MyLP

MyLP has been used at LVC for some time now, allowing students to access resources, applications and their own files from home. As technology has moved on, there have been issues of compatibility with an ever-increasing range of home computer equipment and with the speed at which these resources can be accessed.

We are delighted to say that our technical team has been working hard to resolve these problems, and that a new system will be trialled this summer for general use by students in the autumn term. This will enable them to use their personal files and other school ICT resources from home more easily and more quickly.

As a temporary measure, we will be decreasing the use of the current version of MyLP so that students are not expected to use it to complete or submit homework, for example. More resources will be placed on the student website, and students will be encouraged to use e-mails to submit or 'send in' documents they wish to save back at LVC.

Linton Village College Learning Gateway

We have been delighted that so many parents have signed up to be able to use the Learning Gateway. This secure website allows you to view information about your child online, at any time. It updates you on their latest set of levels or grades, their attendance, behaviour and achievements.

If you haven't signed up yet, please contact online@lvc.org to receive further information and to set up your username and password. You should also use this e-mail address if you have been given these but are having problems accessing your account. You can also contact Alison Miners on 01223 891233 ext 135.

Internet Safety and Social Networking

We have noticed a rise in the use of social networking sites by students who are under the age allowed by the sites themselves (usually 13 years old), and by a small number of students within each year group who choose to use the sites irresponsibly.

We would like to let you know about some of the measures we have in the school to help children understand how to use sites responsibly and safely but also to give you some information about where you can also go to get help.

What we do at school

- No student is allowed to use social networking websites while at school. These are blocked by our filtering system but although students are known to tunnel out, we close these escape routes as we find them.
- In Year 8 all students go through half a term of work in ICT lessons exploring the pros and cons of social networking; this includes one homework which encourages them to talk to you about social networking. We have found that a number of students have found this opportunity for discussion very valuable and led to parents being included on friendship lists.
- We train a group of students to be Cybermentors (<http://www.cybermentors.org.uk>) and these students are available in person and online to any student who is experiencing any problems online.
- We strive to keep all staff updated with information about e-Safety and current concerns.

What you can do at home

We recommend that students under the age of 13 are discouraged from signing up to sites like Facebook and Bebo, it is our experience that children will often find online interactions difficult to handle and unfortunately the repercussions will sometimes spill into the school day and interrupt their learning. We would also like to make you aware that newer mobile social networking applications are becoming available for iPhones and Android phones.

As always the most important safety rule is for children to never give out information about themselves to anyone they do not know in person.

All the big social networking sites have their own safety centres:

- **Facebook Safety Centre**
- <http://www.facebook.com/safety>
- For all safety advice when using Facebook.
- To report abuse or harassment, please email abuse@facebook.com FB will acknowledge receipt of your email and start looking into your complaint within 24 hours. They will get back to you within 72 hours of receiving your complaint.
- **Bebo Safety Centre**
- <http://www.bebo.com/Safety.jsp>
- Videos on privacy, respect, safety, uploading content and reporting abuse.
- To report abuse or harassment on Bebo: Use the Report Abuse button and Bebo staff will respond asap.

- **You Tube Help Centre**
- http://help.youtube.com/support/youtube/bin/request.py?hl=en&contact_type=abuse&rd=1
- Help and support centre for account issues, uploading videos and suggesting features.
- The Help Centre is also for reporting abuse and for requesting video removal. YouTube will remove videos that contravene their guidelines, but you must flag the videos concerned for them to review it.
- The Help Centre also has lots of useful links to other organisations that can help you with safety online in general.
- www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines?gl=GB&hl=en-GB

If you have any questions or would like some more advice, please don't hesitate to contact Mandy Honeyman (mandy.honeyman@lvc.org).

General Advice for the Safer Use of New Technology

As the technology young people access becomes increasingly varied, there are some general guidelines that can help with keeping them safe and ensuring that they are accessing things which are appropriate to their age and understanding. Increasing your understanding of what they use and what they are doing is a key part of this.

1. **Try out new technologies with your children.** Ask them to show you how 'it' works and to let you have a try.
2. **Be aware of what they are doing, who with and when.** Find out what they are using or accessing, which games they are playing, if they are taking part in online games with other people they don't know, and when they are doing this. An increasing number of young people are staying up into the early hours behind closed bedroom doors playing computer games or using their mobile phones, MP3 players, iPods etc.
3. **Remember the 'digital footprint' we all leave.** Ask to see their Facebook/MySpace/Bebo homepage. Look at the information in their profile and help them to make this safer. Check if there is any inappropriate material on there that might give others the wrong impression of them, now or in the future. Explain that information they or their friends put online about them will probably be there forever, even when they apply for jobs!
4. **Use built-in tools eg parental controls, SafeSearch options, privacy controls.** If you don't know how to use them, refer to the manufacturer's instructions, online 'help' or ask where you purchased equipment or devices.
5. **Monitor what older children are using and whether younger children can gain access.** This is particularly true of computer games. These are all age-rated and you should ensure that children are not playing games that are inappropriate for them just because older siblings, relatives or friends make them available or they are left around in the house.
6. **Communicate – keep the dialogue open.** Keep asking about what they are using and show an interest. This will help you to keep up with what is constantly changing and to let them know that there is some monitoring of what they use.

Other useful information

A guide to 'Digital Parenting'

Vodafone have an excellent website set up to help parents understand the technology their children use. It also gives you a link to their 'Digital Parenting' magazine, which is a very good reference guide to all aspects of new technologies your child might be using, including lots of practical tips and information. This can all be found online at <http://parents.vodafone.com>

The Childnet Family Agreement

Childnet have produced a 'family agreement' that everyone using the internet, mobile phones, games consoles and other technology can refer to in your household as a reference guide for safety.

- We will keep all personal information private - including full name, home address, school address, email, home and mobile phone numbers and passwords.
- We will never arrange to meet someone in the real world that we have only met online (without my parent/carer's knowledge and permission).
- We will tell someone if we feel uncomfortable about anything we have seen or heard online or on a mobile phone, or if someone online is making us feel awkward or pressurising us (regardless of what I might have said to this person already).
- We will only visit sites that we know are relevant to us. If we come across a website that is for adults then we will let a parent/carer know.
- We will respect other people online by only sending or posting friendly messages.
- We will only download files online from reliable and legal sources and if unsure we will check first with a parent/carer.
- We will only buy or order something online when we have asked our parent/carer. We will keep credit card information safe and ensure the website we order or buy from has secure transactions highlighted by a lock, key or web address that begins https.
- We will get permission from our friends and family before sending or posting photos of them online or via a mobile phone.
- We will only use the internet for the agreed amount of time and will share it with other members of my family.
- We know that some information online is not for kids. To stay safe we will put together a list of sites we really like and enjoy and will only visit sites on this list.
- We understand that downloading music, games and films for free can be illegal. I will only use legal sites to download and will ask an adult if we are unsure.
- We will ask a parent/carer before registering or signing up for things online, including competitions.
- We will delete any unwanted email or spam.
- We will tell an adult if we receive frightening or bullying text messages or emails or any message with unacceptable content.
- We will only open files from people that I know.
- only link with contacts that we know in the real world.