Dear Parents/Families,

RE: Online Gaming, Well-Being and Attendance

As part of our ongoing commitment to safeguarding and supporting young people, I would like to highlight the importance of monitoring your child's use of online and console gaming. Gaming can be an enjoyable hobby and when balanced appropriately, can help young people relax and socialise. However, excessive gaming can have a significant impact on a child's education, wellbeing and personal safety.

Schools nationally are increasingly seeing concerns linked to excessive gaming, including:

- Reduced concentration and focus in lessons.
- Incomplete homework and poorer academic performance.
- Staying up late into the night, resulting in tiredness at school.
- Lower levels of engagement, motivation and attendance.
- Increased anxiety, frustration and emotional dysregulation.
- Less time spent on exercise, family activities and social interaction away from screens.

Sleep is essential for adolescent development and learning. Students who regularly game late into the evening often arrive at school tired, find it harder to concentrate and may struggle to retain information. Even a small reduction in sleep can have a significant impact on educational outcomes.

Dangers of Modern Games

Many modern games allow players to communicate with people from across the world. Whilst many interactions are positive, online gaming can expose young people to risks such as:

- Inappropriate language and adult content.
- Online bullying and harassment.
- Grooming and exploitation.
- Pressure to share personal information or pictures.
- Exposure to harmful or extremist content.
- Financial risks through scams and in-game purchases.

We encourage all parents and carers to regularly monitor the games their children play, who they communicate with online and the amount of time spent gaming. Parental controls are available on all major gaming platforms and can provide an important layer of protection.

Grand Theft Auto VI (GTA VI)

We are aware of the considerable publicity surrounding the release of Rockstar Games' Grand Theft Auto VI (GTA VI). The game follows Jason and Lucia as they become involved in organised crime, robberies and criminal conspiracies across the fictional state of Leonida. The storyline and gameplay are centred around criminal activity, violence and adult themes. The game carries an adult age classification and includes:

- Violence, blood and gore.
- Strong language.
- Strong sexual content and nudity.
- Drug and alcohol use.
- Criminal themes.

Whilst we understand the excitement surrounding major game releases, GTA VI has been designed for adults and is not intended for children or young people. Age ratings are provided to help families make informed decisions and to protect children from content that may be harmful or unsuitable for their age and stage of development.

We would therefore encourage all families to:

- Check age ratings before purchasing games.

- Consider whether game content is appropriate for their child.
- Discuss online safety and responsible gaming at home.
- Set clear expectations around screen time and bedtime routines.
- Use parental controls where appropriate.

We would also like to thank parents and carers for the continued support you provide in ensuring that education remains a priority. We know that our families recognise the importance of attendance and would not allow their child to miss school in order to play a newly released computer game, no matter how eagerly anticipated it may be.

This sends a powerful message about the value of education, responsibility and future success. The habits young people develop now, including good attendance, healthy routines and self-discipline, will help them achieve their ambitions in the years ahead.

Thank you for your continued support in monitoring your child's gaming and online activity. By working together, we can ensure that our young people enjoy technology safely, responsibly and in a way that supports both their wellbeing and their educational success.

Yours Sincerely,

Safeguarding Team