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### **Advisory on Misuse of Instagram, Online Gaming & Safe Online Practices**

It has been observed that a large number of students from Classes VI to X are highly active on Instagram. Several complaints have been received from both parents and students regarding instances of cyberbullying, misuse of social media, and unsafe online interactions.

The primary cause of such issues appears to be unsupervised and excessive exposure to social media, free online gaming platforms, and other vulnerable web spaces.

In the best interest of our students, the following guidelines are being issued:

1. **Limit Social Media Usage** – Students are advised to minimize or avoid their presence on platforms such as Instagram to safeguard themselves from online threats.
2. **Safer Alternative** – Instagram Teen (Instateens) – In cases where students wish to use Instagram, it is strongly recommended that they opt for Instagram Teen (Instateens) rather than the full version. This restricted platform has safer features and can help significantly reduce exposure to harmful content and instances of cyberbullying.
3. **Avoid Unsupervised Online Games** – Free online games like Free Fire, PUBG, and similar platforms expose children to violent content, online predators, addiction, and cyberbullying. Students are strictly advised to avoid or limit their use of such gaming platforms. Parents are requested to remain vigilant regarding the gaming activities of their wards.
4. **Supervised Email Accounts** – Students must create their email accounts using their correct Date of Birth (DOB). This will enable the opening of minor accounts, which further restricts their online presence and ensures safer digital engagement.
5. **Family Safety Tools** – Parents are strongly advised to provide students with devices that have Family Safety controls enabled. Google offers Family Link and Microsoft provides Family Safety, both of which allow parents to monitor, guide, and control their ward's online activities.
6. **Reels, Shorts, Character AI & OTT Platforms** – Students must be discouraged from spending excessive time on Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, or similar short-video platforms, as they often expose children to unfiltered, harmful, or age-inappropriate content. Likewise, Character AI and similar chat-based AI platforms are mostly A-rated and not suitable for children. Parents are also requested to ensure that OTT platforms (such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+, etc.) are restricted using parental controls. Furthermore, home WiFi should be password-protected with parental filters enabled so that A-rated content can be automatically blocked.
7. **Active Monitoring and Guidance** – Parents should regularly monitor online activity, engage in open discussions, and guide their children in the responsible and judicious use of online platforms.

By adopting these precautions, we can collectively create a safer digital environment for our children, protecting them from cyberbullying, cyber threats, online exploitation, and gaming addiction, while helping them grow into responsible digital citizens.

Let us work together to safeguard the young generation and ensure their safe and positive online presence.

Warm regards,

