# ONLINE SAFETY DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON

In the weeks before Christmas, cyber-attacks such as phishing always increase significantly as criminals try to take advantage of the annual boom in online activity. Last year saw a 432% year-on-year increase in ransomware attacks over the holiday shopping period. It's therefore extremely important to be on the lookout for phishing emails, and to ensure everyone is following cyber security best practice.

Here are some tips on staying safe online during the Christmas break – both at work and at home.

## 1 KNOW WHO YOU'RE SHOPPING WITH

The chances are that, while hunting for Christmas gifts, you'll come across websites you've never heard of before. Before you check out, however, it's worth exercising caution. You might have stumbled upon a scam site designed to steal your personal information. Likewise, you should be suspicious of promo emails that include amazing offers – it's possible that they're not legitimate.

## 2 IF IT SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS

Beware of unbelievable deals. Fraudsters pretend to be legitimate online sellers by using fake websites, sending spam or posting fake ads that look too tempting to resist. There's a chance you're about to be scammed.

## 3 THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

As ever, be cautious when clicking links or opening email attachments, even if they appear to be from trusted retailers. There's always a spike in phishing emails in the run-up to Christmas, and what might appear to be links to coupons or discount codes could be scams.

## 4 LIMIT THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE

When making a purchase via a new e-commerce site, provide only the minimal information necessary to make a purchase and, if possible, check out as a guest rather than opening an account. There's no need to answer security or privacy questions, or to let a company store your payment information, especially if you're unlikely to make another purchase.

## 5 NEVER USE YOUR DEBIT CARD

When making online purchases, always use a credit card or an online payment system such as PayPal that offers some protection against unauthorised purchases.

**Stay Safe, #FraudFreeXmas**

**Saint Nicholas Owen**
Catholic Multi-Academy Company