



ONLINE SAFETY: A SHORT GUIDE FOR PARENTS

The internet can play an important part in many aspects of school life, including teaching, learning and improving communication. However, if not used properly, it can be dangerous or harmful. This simple guide includes hints and tips for both parents and pupils.

Hints & Tips for Parents

- Technology is constantly changing and young people are continually learning - keep up to date on latest developments so you know about the risks.
- Online safety applies to all types of devices - PCs, laptops, tablets, smartphones, e-readers and online gaming
- As technology becomes more portable, set guidelines for where your child could/should use their device
- Treat online safety in the same way as you would offline safety such as stranger danger, crossing the road etc.
- Set up internet security so children can't access websites with adult and inappropriate content
- Don't write anything online that you wouldn't say in person. Comments made on social media and/or public web pages/forums could reflect badly on your child
- Check out our IT policies, particularly the online safety policy, and adhere to them
- Cyber bullying should be treated in the same way as other forms of bullying; contact your child's school to agree a plan for dealing with it
- Be aware that "sexting" increasingly involves younger children, some as young as 10
- Try to establish a system which allows your child to take to you about anything they feel uncomfortable about online

Things to Discuss with Children

- Where it is acceptable to use your portable device? Bedroom? School?
- Who should you talk to if you feel uncomfortable about something you have seen online? e.g. parent, teacher or other responsible adult
- Don't spend too long online; make sure you get some physical exercise every day
- Keep passwords safe - don't write them down and change them regularly
- What personal information is it appropriate to post online?
- How do you report cyber bullying? Take a screen grab of any posts so these can be seen at a later date if needed.
- How do you know the people you are talking to online, are who you think they are?
- What is the difference between a 'real life' friend and an 'online friend'.
- Is it ever sensible to meet up with an online friend?

Other Sources of Information

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation www.lucyfaithfull.org

UK Safer Internet Centre www.saferinternet.org.uk

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre www.ceop.police.uk

Think U Know www.thinkuknow.co.uk

NSPCC www.nspcc.org.uk

Advice for Parents

Protecting your child online

Once you are aware of your *child's online behaviour* and the potential *risks* they may face, there are a number of guidelines you can follow that will help protect your child online.

Engage in open discussion

Promote open and calm discussion about your child's experiences on the internet. If they fear they will be blamed or punished for their online mistakes, they are more likely to hide a problem or try and fix it themselves, potentially making it a lot worse.

If they feel comfortable coming to you with their experiences, you will be able to intervene before a problem escalates or they expose themselves to danger.

Talk about the risks

Children start using the internet from a very young age, so it is important you discuss potential dangers early and regularly. Although topics such as grooming and sexual content can be uncomfortable to approach, it is imperative children are equipped with the tools to protect themselves online.

Have an agreement and establish appropriate behaviour

The behavioural boundaries and sanctions you set for your child must include their use of the internet. You may wish to consider the following:

- Set time limits for your child's internet use and incorporate regular screen breaks;
- Social media profiles are **set to private**, so only trusted contacts can gain access;
- They only accept friend requests from, or communicate with people they know;
- Personal contact details are not given out over the internet;
- They never meet anyone in person from the internet without an accompanying adult;
- They can come to you for help with any problem.

Parental controls

For primary school children, parental controls can be a very effective way of controlling the sites and content your children are able to access. Most computers and internet connected devices have parental controls available. Talk to your manufacturer or service provider to see what restrictions are available.

BT, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media have video guides to help get you started.

Older children and teens are likely to get around filters, or access the internet on personal smart phones or portable devices. It is for these reasons that parental controls cannot be solely relied upon, but seen as an addition to the educational guidelines outlined above.