

Children and technology - A little bit of advice to keep your family safe (new version).

Stop, look and listen! *'Don't talk to strangers!'* – As parents and guardians we are good at giving our children advice hoping it will keep them as safe as possible in the 'real-world'. Sadly dangers also exist in the online world, some even to a greater extent! If you feel you are a bit overwhelmed by technology and the internet, you are not alone! Most of us feel the same – how can we advise our children on something they seem to know more about than us?



The good news is that advising your child to keep safe online is actually a lot simpler than it looks. We all know the types of things we wouldn't want our children exposed to in the 'real-world', the key is just to find ways of preventing them from being exposed to the same things online.

Here is one of the best methods: Just ask your child to show you what they are doing online; what they are playing, what do they search for and who do they send messages/talk to (remember it is very easy for someone to hide their true identity online). Most children love showing you what they are doing!

The next step is to decide on a list of simple golden rules they **must** follow to keep them safe. For example: *'Only talk to people you already know well'*. *'Keep your personal information and contact details secret at all times'*. *'Make sure friends are the only people who can see your social network profile(s)'* (you may wish to check profile settings with your child). It is **very** important to reassure your child that they will not be in trouble if they come and tell you if anything upsets or worries them online, even if it is a result of misbehaviour. After all, it is better to know!



This website has a great example of a 'Walt Disney' family agreement:
family.disney.co.uk/internet-safety

The internet is an amazing resource, essential for modern learning, so we would never discourage children from using it. However it is vital children learn how to use it safely, like they have to learn how to keep safe when they come across 'real-world' dangers like learning how to cross a road.

Please remember, of course, that it's not just computers that can access the internet! Nowadays many devices can give your child access to the online world including some TVs, tablet computers (e.g. iPad), music players (e.g. iPod touch), eBook readers (e.g. Amazon Kindle), games consoles (e.g. Xbox, Wii, PlayStation, Nintendo DS, etc.), mobile phones, watches...and so on! Even if your child is not actually looking at a website, they may still be using the internet (and even sending messages or talking to other people) when they are using programs/apps or when playing a computer game (on their Xbox, Wii, PlayStation, iPad, mobile phone, PC, etc.).

Computer Games



Does your child like to play computer games? Although many games are harmless fun, don't let the word 'game' fool you. I was recently shown the types of things children are exposed to if they play or are allowed to watch some of the popular adult games. Even as an adult I was truly shocked by what I saw! The games feature anything from extreme violence to strong adult content. Some games should not be played or watched by children under any circumstances (even if their friends or older siblings play it!). Did you know computer games often have an age rating like films? Many games have a PEGI rating on the box to indicate the minimum age the game is suitable for. The PEGI rating

considers the age suitability of a game, not the level of difficulty. Games on tablet computers (often called 'apps') are usually given similar age ratings as well. Some games consoles, tablets and other devices even have parent control settings you can switch on to prevent your child downloading and/or playing games with a specific age rating.

Social Networks



Social networks do not allow primary school children on their sites for a very good reason. Safety— at this age, they are too young. It's in their terms and conditions. If children


choose to ignore this limit and sign up to social networks it is vital the child is aware of the risks involved and how to keep themselves safe at all times.



We strongly recommend that children **do not** 'like' our school's Facebook page or post pictures in their school uniform. By doing this they are revealing their location.

Parents and guardians who use social networks (like Facebook) often add their children as friends so they can keep an eye on who they are talking to. This doesn't always work as children will either use private messages or sign up to another social network/messaging service to avoid parents seeing their conversations!

Parental Controls

 Inappropriate websites, images and videos can be found either deliberately or accidentally when searching the internet. The good news is that search engines like Google often have free, easy-to-use safety settings you can quickly turn on to reduce the amount of inappropriate content found during their search. It will not stop everything bad but it should reduce it. Google calls it 'SafeSearch' and YouTube calls it 'Restrictive Mode' for example (these features can be set up on a range of devices to make them safer, not just computers). Alternatively there are also child friendly search engines available which do a similar job (some work really well but some aren't so safe – please find one you can trust!). It is still very important to keep an eye on what your child is doing online, even if you enable safety features.

Some devices also have built-in parental controls which you can turn on (or activate by phoning the internet supplier, mobile network, etc.) to restrict what can be accessed. It won't stop everything bad but it should reduce it. Also there is a range of software available to help keep children safe online which may be useful to you. CyberSentinel (for home use), appears to be a similar product to the one we use in school - there are other good solutions worth looking at as well such as 'Norton Family'. Some do not work on certain devices (e.g. iPads) or may have other limitations, so always check if it will be suitable for your needs. Unfortunately no solution is perfect so it is still very important to be aware of how your children are using the technology they have access to.



Cyberbullying



This form of bullying involves the use of technology where the victim receives upsetting and abusive messages, photos, videos, etc. It can be particularly intrusive as the victim may continue to receive hurtful communications even when away from the person or group of people sending them. Victims have said they felt they had 'no escape' until they reported the bullying. As parents, if you find your child is sending hurtful communication to others or is receiving it, it is important that you report it to our school as soon as possible (and CEOP if necessary). If possible, please keep the evidence.

Geolocation



Many phones (and other gadgets) have a built in GPS (Global Positioning System). This may be useful for emergency services to quickly locate your child in an emergency or for your child to find their way home if they get lost but their location can also be revealed to strangers via other apps if they are not careful.

There are some particularly dangerous apps which allow people to chat to strangers nearby. Some even allow anonymous chat.

Geotagging - When a photo is taken, hidden GPS data can also be included on the photo to help the user remember where the photo was taken. If the photo is posted online, someone could use this information to locate where your child is likely to be from the previous photos they have taken.

You may not think it is wise to disable the phone or gadget's GPS completely but it is worth checking that it is disabled for certain apps such as those related to social networking or messaging.

Remember to check for any new apps or software that your child has downloaded to ensure it is not revealing their location (or geotagging photos they post online). Parental controls may not be able to prevent them changing these safety settings so it is worth explaining to your child why it is important not to reveal their location!

Real World Games

Real world games such as 'Pokémon GO' involve the user walking around in the 'real-world' while playing a game on their phone (or similar device) which is linked to their actual location. These games are often great for exercise, very clever and brilliant fun! But be careful! Children (and adults alike) must not be tempted to go to isolated locations, where there is a risk dangerous people could harm them.



Users may meet fellow gamers while playing so 'stranger danger' advice must be remembered. Also while playing, users must be fully aware of their surroundings. If they run in front of a car, there is no second chance in the 'real-world'!

Further Advice

CEOP Videos

We highly recommend you watch the following CEOP videos with your child (search for them on the CEOP YouTube channel):

- CEOP Lee & Kim (younger children)
- CEOP Jigsaw (older children).



There are also many other fantastic CEOP videos to watch as your child gets older.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

This is one of the very best websites for online safety advice for parents, guardians and children. It has some lovely activities for children, teaching them how to keep safe while using the internet and other forms of technology.



CEOP Button



If either you or your child have an online safety issue that does not require immediate police action, it can be reported to CEOP www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/ (the CEOP website also features some excellent online safety advice).

Many websites (including our school website) have a CEOP button which will take you straight to this website to report an issue.

www.seeme-hearme.org.uk

A great website for all parents to help spot the signs of sexual exploitation of their child.

www.getsafeonline.org & www.cyberstreetwise.com

These two websites have some excellent advice on other technology topics e.g. online shopping safety, how to create strong passwords and things to consider when using Wi-Fi in public places.

School Website

Our 'Online Safety' page on our school website (coming soon...) is definitely worth a visit from time to time! We aim to keep the advice here as up-to-date as possible. This is important as technology is changing all the while! We will also put links here to other great online safety websites.

Please Remember

If you feel your child is acting differently or withdrawn, looking at the technology they have access to (even at a friend's house!). It could help determine the cause.

If you would like any further information (or have any issues to discuss) please don't hesitate to get in contact with us. We'd be happy to help! We also run internet safety workshops at school to help parents and guardians keep their children safe online. Please enquire if you would like to attend. Thank you for reading.

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