

How to keep your child safe online

It is now virtually impossible to be a parent of a child who is not an active participant in the online world. As parent/carers you are aware of the wonderful learning benefits of engaging children in an online world, however, as we enter another period of National Lockdown we wanted to provide you with some useful information that will support you in keeping your child safe in the online world.

We are all becoming increasingly aware of some of the more dangerous content and sites on the internet that can be upsetting for your child. We do not want to alarm you but its important that you have information to support you in this really important aspect of your child's world.

We acknowledge that this information will be more relevant for some pupils than others but it is important to be aware for yourself and your wider family.

Here are a few suggestions for you to consider in relation to your child's online activities

- Be aware of how your child engages with the online world.
- Talk to your child about their online habits if they are able to do so
- Be aware if your child is engaging in social networking and decide what is appropriate for your child.
- Make sure your child knows what to do if they do come across inappropriate content or something that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Make yourself aware of age appropriate content and gaming.
- Take some time to learn about some of the games and Apps your child may be using

We have given you some brief information below about some important issues. Some you will have heard of and others will be new to you and the links at the end of this information contain other useful information on a wide range of online safety issues including those below.

Many of the links to websites below have new information added in response to the National Lockdown and the increased use of online resources. There are lots of very easy to watch videos and information specifically for parents.

Online Grooming

Online grooming is where someone befriends a child online and builds up their trust with the intention of exploiting them and causing them harm.

Harm caused by grooming can be sexual abuse, both in person and online, and exploitation to obtain sexually explicit images and videos of the child.

Grooming techniques could also be used as part of the radicalisation process or to obtain financial information from the child or their family.

Online bullying or cyberbullying

Cyberbullying, or online bullying, is when someone uses the internet to bully someone else. The Cambridge dictionary defines cyberbullying as, 'Someone who uses the internet to harm or frighten another person, especially by sending them unpleasant messages.'

- Cyberbullying often happens on personal devices that young people have continuous access to, e.g. a phone. This means it can happen anywhere and at any time, so it can feel like it's hard to escape.
- It can be difficult to know who the bully is, and it might be someone unknown.
- It can be hard to control the spread of messages, images, and videos sent online which means many people could see them in a short period of time.
- It can be difficult to understand behaviour online and some instances may be interpreted as cyberbullying when in fact the intention wasn't to upset or harm someone. For example, a comment made as a joke or 'banter' may still deeply upset and offend someone.
- Online bullying can leave a trail of evidence which can be helpful when dealing with the incident and reporting it.

Sexting

The term 'sexting' has come to include many different forms and can happen as part of an established or emerging relationship, as a dare, or through lack of understanding. The content is usually initially created to be sent to a particular individual, but can end up being shared more widely. For example, a person may send a nude image consensually, to someone they feel they can trust, but that person shares it on elsewhere without permission. It is often associated with teenagers, but can happen between younger children as well.

Not all incidents of sexting are consensual. It might be that a person is blackmailed or coerced into sending them, through emotional exploitation, or using the threat of 'leaking' private information or other photos to friends and family. It is also possible that a nude image appears amongst a peer group online, with the name of someone attached to it, but in fact is an image found online with no connection to the victim.

Such images can be created using a range of mobile devices, technologies and online spaces. Photos and videos are often created via phones, tablets or webcams, and may be shared via messaging apps or social media sites.

Screen time

Screen time can offer children opportunities to learn and develop new skills at a touch of a button but like anything, too much of it can have a negative effect on their wellbeing.

As children get older and more independent online, finding the right balance for your family can be challenging but the key is to think about it early on and set some clear boundaries around their online use.

Radicalisation and Extremism

There's a chance that your child may meet people online or visit websites that could lead them to adopting what you consider to be extreme views, and becoming radicalised.

Curiosity could lead your child to seek out these people, or they could befriend your child in order to encourage them to adopt beliefs or persuade them to join groups whose views and actions you as a parent would consider extreme.

Online gaming

Gaming is a great way for young people to relax, socialise with their friends and have fun. Children can play on games consoles, apps or websites, mobiles, tablets, PCs, or through smart speakers and virtual reality headsets. They can also chat to other players using messaging platforms for gamers, or watch livestreams of well-known gamers.

You can find out more about the different types of games children like to play on Net Aware in partnership with O2.

Online Porn

It's normal for young people to be curious about sex and relationships and sometimes they may search online for information or answers to questions they have. They may also do this if they're worried or embarrassed about asking their parents or guardians.

Live Streaming and video Apps

Children and teenagers are likely to be spending more time on livestreaming and video apps because of coronavirus. While many children will be using livestreaming or video apps to talk to friends or family they can't see in person, some children may be talking to people they don't know or sharing personal information without realising.

Below are some links to useful websites with additional information that you may find useful and will give you additional information about the issues described above

Self-harm

Self-harm is often understood to be a physical response to an emotional pain of some kind and can be very addictive.

As children's use of the online world grows, increasing mental health issues such as self-harm are taking a different form online. Children are now actively seeking abuse online as a way to self-harm.

Childline - an online resource helping to make the internet a great and safe place for children

CEOP – the place to get advice on and report an inappropriate or potentially illegal content or action

Childnet – This website has a whole section of resources specifically for parents and carers

Digizen – a fantastic resource that includes all sorts of advice on how we, as adults, can encourage children to become responsible digital citizen and discerning when viewing digital content

Internet Matters - Helping parents keep their children safe online

KIDSMART– a fantastic online resource with excellent E-safety tips. There is also a fantastic children's section for your children to explore.

NSPCC – A well known charity with lots of really useful information

NSPCC guide to keeping children safe online - advice on the appropriateness of online content from the NSPCC.

NSPCC guide for the use of social media - advice for social networking.

ROBLOX- a parent guide to using the product safely

How to talk to your teenager with Special Needs about Radicalisation and Extremism – This website will support you in having conversations with your child and has a good range of easy to use information.

ThinkUKnow – an excellent website that has all sorts of advice for parents and carers as well as sections for children who want to learn about E-safety for themselves - an excellent resource to look at as a family.

UK Safer Internet Centre – this website contains a wealth of resources and content about how to keep children safe online. They are also the group behind the Safer Internet Day initiative that is celebrated on a yearly basis.

Youtube - a parent guide to using the product safely.

Be Internet Legends - this website is focused around helping children be safe and confident while online. There are resources tailored to both parents/carers as well as the Interland interactive game for children to play through.

National Online Safety - this website provides parents & carers free guides for potential online dangers from new apps, websites and online trends. The guides help explain the possible risks and signs for parents and carers to be aware of in order to help keep their children safe online.