

Dear Parent/Carer

Many of our Children will be at home for long periods due to the Coronavirus outbreak. It is inevitable that they will be spending more time online. It is important that we keep our children safe when they are using the internet/social media and gaming.

We can only be successful in keeping children safe online if we work with you to ensure the e-Safety message is consistent. Your help is needed to talk to your children about how they can keep safe and behave appropriately online. Recently we have had a number of parents express concerns about children's behaviour online. Children can accidentally or deliberately be exposed to unwanted or unpleasant content or comments online and there are steps you can take at home to minimise this risk.

- All the popular Social Media platforms (Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Tic Toc etc.) have an age restriction of 13, and WhatsApp have an age restriction of 16. Therefore, no Primary school student should have a Social Media profile. There are good reasons for this age restriction to be in place. For example, inappropriate content, lack of maturity to use the site safely, exposing them to harmful content, risk of being contacted by Sexual predators, creating an online profile which will be hard to remove in the future, placing added pressure on the child to deal with situations beyond their years. The list goes on but as parents you need to be aware of the safety implications by allowing your child access to Social Media at such a young age. If you do allow your child to have a Social Media account, make sure you set the privacy settings to private and check your child's account on a regular basis.

The Communication Act 2003 makes it an offence to send anything on the Internet that is offensive, indecent, threatening or false and the reason for sending it is to cause the other person annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety. Remember the age of criminal responsibility in England is 10 years old. We would not want any of our children to get on the wrong side of the law, so we have to ensure they are using the Internet in a responsible and appropriate way.

What can parents/carers do? Follow the Golden Rules!

Ground Rules

- Discuss as a family how the internet will be used in your house. Consider what should be kept private online (personal information, photos etc.) and decide rules for making and meeting online friends. Make sure you know what your child is doing online much like you would offline. Only allow them to play online games that are age appropriate. **Check the PEGI rating of the game. Remember the average age of an online gamer is 38 years old, there are far more adults playing these games than children, so we need to be vigilant.**

Online Safety

- Install antivirus software, secure your internet connection and use Parental Control functions on your home broadband for computers, mobile phones and games consoles to block unsuitable content. A useful website to show you how to do all of this is <https://www.internetmatters.org/>
- Remember that parental control tools are not always 100% effective and sometimes unsuitable content can get past them, so don't rely on them alone to protect your child. **There has been an increase on online scams and fake news referring to the Coronavirus, so make sure you take advice from reliable sources such as NHS, GOV.UK, Local Authority, BBC etc.**

Location

- Locate your computer in a supervised family area. Always supervise the use of webcams and applications which allow voice or video chat. Consider your child's use of other devices that allow internet access such as Mobile Phones, Games Consoles, Kindles, iPod etc.

Handheld Devices

- Remember that Children are accessing the internet via their phones, tablets, iPods, Kindles, X boxes, Nintendo's, PlayStation etc. Without parental controls on these devices, children can access whatever they want on the internet. Visit <https://www.internetmatters.org/> to show how to set parental controls on a variety of handheld devices and gaming machines.

Dialogue

Talk to your child and ask them to show or even teach you how they use the internet, learn which websites or tools they like to use and why. Learning together can often open opportunities to discuss safe behaviour with your child.

- Always ensure your child knows how to block or report people online who send nasty or inappropriate messages or content. Encourage your child not to retaliate or reply.
- Make sure your child knows to tell an adult they trust if they see something online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable.
- It's essential to be realistic - banning the internet or technology will not work and it often makes a child less likely to report a problem. Education around safe use is essential.

DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO HAVE INTERNET ENABLED DEVICES IN THEIR BEDROOMS UNTIL THEY REACH AN AGE AND MATURITY TO KEEP THEMSELVES SAFE.

Websites for more information:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk – Visit the “Parent/Carer” Section and use the “Click CEOP” button to seek advice and report online abuse

www.childnet.com – Visit the ‘Know It All’ Section for an interactive guide about online safety

www.getsafeonline.org – Free up-to-date Security advice

www.parentinfo.org - Supported by CEOP

www.bbc.co.uk/online/safety

www.cybermentors.org.uk – Online support for children

www.childline.org.uk – Online support for children

<https://www.internetmatters.org/> - Explains how to set up parental controls on most devices and game consoles.

<https://www.common sense media.org/> - Bit like TripAdvisor for the Internet. Find out about Apps and Games and age restrictions.

Please visit your School Website which will have further information on keeping children safe online

Yours sincerely