

Rivermead e-Safety guidance

There is no doubt that new electronic technologies enhance our ability to learn and communicate. The Internet is a rich resource that can provide us with useful information, inspire creativity and quickly distribute positive messages. However, alongside the very beneficial aspects, there are certain associated dangers that we must be aware of so that everyone can enjoy the benefits safely. The aim of this information is to advise you of the most common aspects used by children and their potential dangers, and to equip you and your child with the tools and knowledge to use the Internet safely.

To begin with, it is important that you are aware of the ever-changing websites and games that your child is accessing, that you know when they are accessing them and that together you have understood and applied the relevant security settings. It is also important that you create an open environment in which your child feels confident to talk to you about any uncertainties they may face.

The areas covered in this information are:

- Social networking
- Cyber bullying
- Grooming
- Inappropriate websites
- Gaming
- Mobile phones
- Parental controls
- Parent role
- School's role
- Useful websites

Social networking (Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram)

Social networking sites, if used appropriately, can be a positive tool for sharing information and communicating with others. The dangers associated with these websites include cyber bullying, exposure to inappropriate or offensive material and befriending people who potentially have ulterior motives, which may lead to cases of grooming.

Advice:

- It is worth noting that many of these sites have age restrictions or recommendations and parents should bear these in mind before agreeing to allow children to use them.
- Never place personal information on these websites such as address, telephone number or school. (Remember that photos can often give personal clues.)
- Remember there is a difference between a real-life friend and an online friend which can merely be a contact.
- Discuss with your children who their real friends are and the dangers of accepting a request or befriending someone they don't know. As soon as a friend request is accepted, information on your profile can be accessed and content could be shared without permission and used by others.
- Encourage your children to be aware of the nature of posts and the content of photos and ensure they understand that whatever they post is in the public domain. Screenshots could be taken, downloaded and saved, even if an image is removed by the person who originally posts it.

Cyber bullying

Bullying is the repeated actions of one person/group to another with the aim of hurting them, which may include physical and emotional harm. Cyber bullying is bullying via electronic devices including mobile phones and online social networking and gaming sites. This may take the form of text messaging, online messaging (including chat sites on games), emailing and comments made on social media sites. Some of these include WhatsApp, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This form of bullying can happen anywhere. Bullying can affect confidence, self-esteem and self-worth and can be extremely damaging.

Advice:

- Do not respond to the bully.
- Block contact with the bully.
- Save relevant communication, such as texts, emails or web pages (by print screening or taking a photo with a phone) including dates and times.
- Report the incident to the website or provider.
- If persistent, contact the police.

Grooming

Grooming is the process of manipulating a child to gain control over them. Offenders will often befriend the victim and gain their trust, sometimes posing as a child themselves. This may be done through social networking platforms and gaming sites, however grooming could also be through befriending in person. Clearly this can have serious implications.

Advice:

- Discuss the dangers with your child.
- Remind your child not to communicate with people they don't know (see Social networking).
- Remind your child never to arrange to meet anyone on their own.
- Remind your child to tell an appropriate adult if they feel uncomfortable in any way.
- Inform the police if you have any concerns at all.

Inappropriate Websites

The Internet is accessible to all and anyone can add information to it at any time. Whilst much of this information is useful, there is undoubtedly material which may be inappropriate or offensive to others, particularly children, including that of a violent or sexual nature. As a result, children may be subjected to images or material that is inappropriate for their age. This may cause them distress, give them a distorted view of the world or send wrong messages which may lead them to behave in an inappropriate way.

Advice:

- Apply relevant parental controls to all electronic devices that are accessible to your child.
- Give thought to the location of the devices. Try to ensure that they are either in a communal area in the home or are used in such an area so that you can monitor what your child is doing.
- Agree with your child which sites are appropriate.
- Monitor which sites your child is using.
- Encourage your child to tell you if they see anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or upset.
- Report any content you think may be illegal to an appropriate body, e.g. the police, Internet Foundation Watch (www.iwf.org.uk).
- YouTube is a website commonly used by adults and children to view, upload or comment on videos. YouTube has its own filters for illegal content but there will be material which is age inappropriate and easily accessible. YouTube has introduced a parental control facility to enable children to search on the website safely. There is also an alternative Kids YouTube which has increased security and search restrictions.

Gaming

Video games are enjoyed by many and can help to develop hand eye co-ordination, key board skills, general knowledge and can provide an important source of relaxation. Most can be played via a games console or any device with an internet connection such as a computer, a tablet or a phone. They can be played offline (alone) or online (where there are opportunities to play against or communicate with anybody else who may be online at the same time). They are usually rated (similar to films) to help protect younger people from exposure to material that is inappropriate (e.g. violence, offensive language or content of a sexual nature). Playing age inappropriate games may lead to children being subjected to material that they do not understand and which is offensive or distressing. Playing games online means that children could be at risk from cyber bullying, grooming if they are not monitored.

Advice:

- Ensure your child is playing games that are appropriate for their age.
- See above advice under cyber bullying, grooming and social networking.

Mobile phones

Mobile phones are commonplace in today's society including amongst a growing number of primary school children. Clear benefits include communication and a source of information. The devices themselves are becoming ever more powerful and many offer the same functions as a computer, including linking to the internet. The negative aspects can therefore be linked to those of any internet application including social networking, gaming, cyber bullying and grooming.

Advice:

- Research the parental settings of your intended provider. Choose those that offer a parental settings service which will allow you to exercise certain controls over your child's phone including blocking access to the internet or certain sites and allowing you to monitor their activity.
- Even when you have set controls, access to the internet may still be gained through freely available Wifi outside of your home which may mean that your controls no longer apply. Talk to your child about the dangers and your expectations.
- Be aware that a mobile phone contract will be in the name of the parent or carer who takes it out. This means that the person named in the contract may be legally responsible for the content that the device sends and receives.

Parental control software

There is a wide range of parental control software packages that you can buy or sometimes download for free. They are all different but often include facilities to filter, apply time limits and monitor usage. Always look for reputable companies and check out reviews online. Do not allow your child to set the controls; do it yourself or ask the provider for help and advice. It should be noted that no control system is 100% effective/safe and should not be used as a substitute for communicating safety messages to your child.

Parental role

It is important to establish an environment where you can talk to your child openly about the benefits and the risks attached to using electronic devices and the Internet. Sharing the benefits with them will allow you to model good practice in terms of keeping safe. It is recommended that you put in place relevant parental controls and that you monitor what your child is accessing, ensuring it is age appropriate, when they are accessing and for how long. If conflicts arise involving other children from school, particularly if it affects them during the school day, keep us informed so that we can help educate pupils accordingly.

School's role

- We use a range of electronic tools and the Internet as part of our educational provision to our pupils. A filtering system is applied by our Internet provider which helps ensure that the risk to the exposure of inappropriate websites and material is reduced (although as mentioned previously this is never 100% guaranteed). However, our children are taught how to respond if on the rare occasion anything were to get through the filter so that this can be investigated and steps taken to ensure this isn't repeated.
- We aim to highlight the many benefits but also inform pupils of the risks attached to using such devices and sources of information. In doing so, we hope to educate pupils in the appropriate and safe use of electronics enabling them to enjoy and maximise the many benefits of using such tools.
- Pupils have an e-safety computing session at least once a half term that focuses on a different aspect of online safety and the steps they need to take.
- Pupils are always monitored when they are using accessing the internet during school time and lessons are planned carefully to ensure that pupils are only accessing safe sites when searching.
- Lessons that require videos from YouTube are accessed using a Safe YouTube proxy which removes related videos, comments and autoplaying videos so that only teacher checked content is viewed.

Useful Internet Links for Parents & Carers

- Vodafone Digital Parenting www.vodafone.com/parents
- Child exploitation & online protection centre www.ceop.police.uk
- Parent info <http://parentinfo.org>
- Get safe online www.getsafeonline.org
- Internet matters www.internetmatters.org
- Childnet international www.childnet.com
- Parent controls <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/parents-and-carers/parental-controls>
- ThinkuKnow www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents
- Uk safer internet centre www.saferinternet.org.uk
- Connect safely <http://www.connectsafely.org/safety-tips-advice>