

Keeping Children Happy and Safe Online

It can be hard to keep track of what your child is doing on social networks, apps and games or know how to keep them safe.

In school, many situations where children report being unhappy in school have an online element to them. For example, name calling and falling out between children can often start, and continue, online.

Indeed, vulnerable children can sometimes be affected by their experiences in the online world, even when those experiences would not normally be seen as harmful. For instance, the effect of long periods of playing games on concentration and sleep.

The NSPCC and O2 through their Share Aware programme suggest this guidance as a starting point:

“By following these four simple steps, you can act as a team so you can enjoy the online world safely:

Talk to your child about staying safe online

Explore the online world together

Agree rules about what’s ok and what’s not

Manage the software and tools your family use to reduce risks”

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/>

If you are concerned about your child’s online safety or well-being and would like some support please contact your child’s class teacher in the first instance.

So what are the actual threats to our children when they are online?

Most online activity your child will be involved in will be constructive and harmless and the internet can be a positive experience for young people. However, there are risks and the main ones are outlined below:

1. **Accessing inappropriate material** – Content on the internet is not broken into age or developmentally appropriate areas. Without supervision and guidance, a young child can either unintentionally or purposely find content that is disturbing, explicit or inappropriate. The internet will also be forming your child’s attitudes and beliefs – for example about body image.
2. **Cyberbullying** - Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behaviour.
3. **Cyberpredators** - Adults who want to exploit young people can use the Internet to try to locate and "groom" potential victims. More likely than this, however, are situations where internet users pretend to be someone they are not. This is very difficult to identify and potentially harmful to young impressionable internet users.

4. **Posting private information or images** – Young people can be tricked into posting information online that is personal and potentially embarrassing. This may come back to affect them later as once posted this information is difficult to remove.
5. **Phishing and scams** – Phishing is the fraudulent attempt to obtain sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by posing as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication.
6. **Accidentally downloading malware** - Malware including viruses can be introduced onto your home computers when games or apps are downloaded. This can affect the functioning of your computers or even steal, encrypt, or delete your data, alter or hijack core computer functions, and spy on your computer activity without your knowledge or permission.

Unrestricted and unmonitored access to the internet including online gaming carries all of the above risks. However, the biggest impacts we see on children in school are a) the effects of spending long periods of time online – lack of sleep, inability to concentrate and b) the impact of being in contact with friends and acquaintances for potentially twenty-four hours a day. Peer pressure and the ups and downs of friendships are part of childhood and growing up but the lack of escape from this and the ease of saying unpleasant things online may cause anxiety and emotional issues in some children.

WhatsApp and Cyber-bullying



Most online activity your child will be involved in will be constructive and harmless and the internet can be a positive experience for young people. However, cyber-bullying is a significant threat to some children's well-being.

Cyber-bullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyber-bullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behaviour.

I would ask you to ensure you are monitoring your child's activity while on a mobile phone or other device to ensure they are being used appropriately and positively.

I have attached information for parents about WhatsApp from nationalonlinesafety.com. You will note that this app has a 16+ age limit.

Where can I go to get support to help keep my child safe online?

There is a lot of support available to keep your child safe online. Below are some useful links to help parents and carers:

- [Thinkyouknow](#) (advice from the National Crime Agency to stay safe online)
- [Internet matters](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Parent info](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [LGfL](#) (support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online)
- [Net-aware](#) (support for parents and careers from the NSPCC)

