How can I help my child stay safe online?

"Keeping children safe online is the biggest child protection challenge of this generation. Parents have a vital role to play…" NSPCC

In the Spring Term at the online safety workshop for all parents, some parents said even though their children were lower down the school, they would like some awareness around what to expect as their children grew older and are about to depart for secondary school. This handout aims to highlight some of the key points for parents throughout the school around how to keep your child safe online.

How am I expected to know everything? Surely that isn't possible?

Children today are growing up with pressures relating to the online world that their parents did not have to face when growing up. As a result, many parents may feel they are lacking in knowledge when it comes to understanding what is going on in their child's online life – but fear not! You are not expected to know everything about the newest app or craze because the online world moves so fast, it's impossible. Ofcom research shows: of those parents with children aged between 5 and 15, 87% had sought advice about how to keep them safe online; 71% of parents admit they consult their child for technological advice and the average six-year-old understands more about digital technology than a 45 year old! Technology moves faster than you can keep up but you can help foster positive behaviours and attitudes in your child that will transcend new developments. There are many sources of advice to help to support parents, some of which are identified in this handout.

But my children doesn't use this technology…

Even if you have no technology at home, children will still use technology elsewhere in their lives such as at their friends' houses and at school. It is vital children have the skills to help keep themselves safe and to build adequate skills to negotiate their lives online.

When should I start talking to my child about this?

Online life is starting earlier - the Government has recently recommended apps for 2-5 year olds. https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/ Offline, adults aim not just to 'educate' children as they grow up, but to help them develop resilience and the ability to interact critically with the world how to identify fake news and how to report and seek help if they see something that has upset them (20% of 7-11 year olds have done so according to Ofcom research). We teach comprehensive age appropriate e-safety as part of the curriculum but parental involvement with your child's online life is essential to keep your child safe.

The Children's commissioner's report 'Growing up Digital' acknowledges, *"Younger children viewing parental intervention as positive whereas older children are more ambivalent to regard parents (or other adults) as invading their privacy."*
Therefore, it is vital that your conversations with your child concerning your child's online use start early, whilst at Primary School.

How can I talk to my child about his/her online life?

It can be difficult to know how to start talking to your child about what they're doing online or who they might be speaking to. But talking regularly, like you would about their day at school, will help your child feel relaxed and mean that when they do have any worries, they're more likely to come and speak to you. It can help to:

• reassure them that you're interested in their life, offline and online. Recognise that they'll be using the internet to research homework as well talking to their friends.

• ask your child to show you what they enjoy doing online or apps they're using so you can understand them.

• be positive but also open about anything you're worried about. You could say "I think this site's really good" or "I'm a little worried about things I've seen here."

• ask them if they're worried about anything, and let them know they can come to you.

• ask them about their friends online and how they know they are who they say they are.

• listen for the reasons why your child wants to use apps or sites you don't think are suitable, so you can talk about these together.

How can I find out more about what my child is doing with technology?

It is unrealistic for you to keep up with all the new games, apps social networks. The website https://www.net-aware.org.uk/ helps you know what the official age rating is for an application (app), the rating the average parent would give it and the rating a child would give it. It shows you how to set parental controls and how to talk with your child about the app and how to report inappropriate content.

https://www.bbc.com/ownit also has accessible up-to-date information about the latest apps

You will see from the first site mentioned, unrestricted access to YouTube is potentially very damaging for a child. There is an app made by YouTube called **YouTube Kids** which shows videos picked by humans as being appropriate for different age ranges. Whilst it does not mean you can leave your child unattended with YouTube, it does help reduce the chance of them seeing something that is inappropriate. https://www.youtubekids.com/

Where can I get technical support?

Parents seeking face-to-face advice about how to best protect their children online can make an appointment with the NSPCC's O2 gurus in their nearest store or can call the O2 NSPCC Online Safety Helpline **(0808 8005002)**. This is free and you do not have to be an O2 customer to make use of this.

https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/ also gives technical advice around managing devices such as specific routers, smart TVs, voice assistants, smartphones and games consoles and how to restricting time spent on devices (by automatically shutting it off so you don't have to), how to apply filterers and monitor use.

What if I think my child has seen or experienced something inappropriate?

• You can contact the school or the NSPCC helpline for free support and advice on 0808 800 5000 or contact them online.

• Children can contact Childline by phone (0800 1111) or via their website https://www.childline.org.uk any time to get support.

• You or your child can contact the police directly https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/

Should I worry about sharing information about my child online ('Sharenting')?

The Children Commissioners report, 'Life in Likes – 8-11 year olds' found, *"Many children felt uncomfortable and bothered by their parents posting pictures of them on social media, yet felt they could do little to stop it."*

The authors of *Sharenthood* shared the top six things parents should be thinking about before they post... "Parents have always shared stories and photos with friends and family. 'Sharenting', however, takes sharing to a different level," "Sharented information has a reach and longevity unimagined 20 years ago. Remember that once information is out there, and particularly if it has been tagged or reposted, it is very hard to take down. Would your child – indeed would you – want the posts you made when they were seven to be viewed by their university friends, work colleagues or future employers?"

In addition, photographs and videos accompanied by information about a child's school, age, or location may expose children to online grooming.

What are the actual online harms?

The internet is an extraordinary force for good but it is not designed with children in mind. Most social media platforms have a minimum age limit of 13, but research shows a growing number of children aged under 13 are using social media, with 3 in 4 children aged 10-12 having their own accounts. A 2019 Ofcom report, showed 37% of children aged between 8 and 11 own a smart phone.

Whereas 20 years ago a computer would likely be in a communal area of the house so children's online behaviour was more visible, children are now more now likely to have opportunity to be left on their own with technology as devices have become smaller and more mobile. This increases the risks to young people.

Some families keep devices such as phones and tablets downstairs and devices are not used an hour before bedtime. Using technology before bedtime or even during the night can stimulate the brain, making it more difficult to get to sleep and cause unnecessary distraction. Some children face huge pressure to be 'always on' and feel they have to respond to messages immediately. Getting used to having times when a phone is not by their side helps focus attention and reduce dependence. If a phone is used as an alarm clock, it can be easily replaced by buying an alarm clock.

The Children's Commissioner's report, shows that many Year 7 children are finding social media hard to manage and becoming over-dependent on 'likes' and 'comments' for social validation. They are also adapting their offline behaviour to fit an online image, and becoming increasingly anxious about 'keeping up appearances' as they get older.

Before posting (or speaking!) it can be helpful to THINK:

T = Is it True?
H = Is it Helpful?
I = Is it inspiring?
N = Is it Necessary?
K = Is it Kind?

Isn't 'falling out' online just the same as in real life?

Younger children were more likely to see mean comments from strangers on apps like Roblox, whereas older children, who were communicating with a greater number of people on group chats, faced issues and confusion around the blurring of 'jokes' that were posted publicly.

This was exacerbated when children moved from interacting with close friends online to wider peer groups – such as group chats containing a whole class, at secondary school. For example, children described instances where group chats on WhatsApp or Snapchat were used to make a 'joke' that singled out one person. However, the intention behind these could easily be lost, and 'jokes' could be seen to be serious.

Figures from Ofcom show that "16% of 8–11s" and "31% of 12–15s" who go online say they have, at some point, "seen online content that they found worrying or nasty". Survey of over 3,000 young people indicated that 54% of respondents had witnessed 'mean comments' on social media.

The school will work to support the child who has experienced bullying and the child who has intentionally or un-intentionally bullied. Children and young people don't always realise what they're doing is bullying, or understand how much their actions have hurt someone.

I think my child is bullying another child, what should I do?

If you find out your child has done something to hurt someone else, you're likely to feel angry, disappointed or any number of other strong emotions. Explain that what they're doing is unacceptable. Children and young people don't always realise what they're doing is bullying, or understand how much their actions have hurt someone.

Explain to your child how bullying can make people feel. Childline has lots of great advice specially designed for children and young people.

Help them realise how what they've done will have affected the other person. You could ask them how they think the other child is feeling, and to remember how they've felt when someone has said or done something unkind to them.

Explain what you're going to do next, such as telling their school, and what you expect your child to do now.

Ask them whether they have any questions about why their actions need to change.

I think my child is being bullied online, what should I do?

For the majority of people, most experiences of technology are useful and positive. Research figures vary but indicate that around 10% of young people have experienced cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can affect and involve all members of the school community – pupils, staff, parents and carers. Remember:

- Don't fight back online
- Don't put nasty things online about them
- Do not delete post you have received as these provide evidence
- Stop the Cycles of being an active bystander: Encourage your children if they have seen bullying online to speak to an adult.
- Speak with the school.

What is the effect of social media on my child's self-esteem?

When looking at other people's pictures and posts, it can be easy to think they're all doing great and you're the only one that worries about how you look or feel. The thing is, everyone feels like that now and then – you just can't tell that by only looking at their social media. People tend to put their best selves forward and often hide all their other insecure parts. This can give the rest of us the impression that we're the only ones who feel this way. It's just not true!

What is the harm in 'live streaming'?

Live streaming is increasing in popularity; this is where an individual is filming live without delay so chances to reflect upon or edit comments before posting are not available. Some children record themselves playing computer games. The footage can be recorded by whomever is watching. In some cases, the person presenting the live stream does not know who is watching.

Emily Cherry from Barnardo's highlighted its report on live streaming which found that over 50% of children aged 10 to 15 years were using live streaming apps and that over half of children regretted posting content after posting it. They are putting out live-streaming content and then experiencing negative comments, trolling and, potentially, adults grooming them.

If you have any more questions please speak with the school.

For further information:

- Advice from the NSPCC on keeping children safe online.
  https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/

- Bullying: Advice from advice about different types of bullying, and how you can get help and support.
  https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/

- Children's Commissioner's Report - Growing Up Digital
  https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Growing-Up-Digital-Taskforce-Report-January-2017_0.pdf

- Early years apps approved to help families encouraged to support children's literacy and language skills from the home
  https://www.gov.uk/government/news/early-years-apps-approved-to-help-families-kick-start-learning-at-home

- Impact of social media and screen-use on young people's health
  https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmsctech/822/822.pdf

- Life in 'likes' Children's Commissioner report into social media use among 8-12 year olds https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Childrens-Commissioner-for-England-Life-in-Likes-3.pdf

- Sharenting: Six things parents should think about before hitting 'Post' on social media
  https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/CDT1p7qHZxjrGLsw1xh7Pg/sharenting-six-things-parents-should-think-about-before-hitting-post-on-social-media

- Steeple Morden Primary School e-safety page
  http://www.steeplemorden.cambs.sch.uk/website/e-safety/272023

- Unkind Behaviour in Group Chats
  https://www.childnet.com/blog/group-chats-the-new-digital-etiquette