



9 February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Stay Safe Online

Children are gaining access to, and owning, their own devices from a younger age. Devices can be great for learning and development however you should be aware of the content available and the chance of your child seeing something they should not when online.

It is important to have regular conversations about staying safe online and to encourage young people to speak to you if they come across something worrying.

These resources provide guidance and support for you on how to talk to your child about a range of online safety issues, as well as set up home filtering and age-appropriate parental controls on digital devices:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> - Provides resources for parents and carers and children of all ages to help keep children safe online

<https://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers> - Childnet has developed guidance for parents and carers to begin a conversation about online safety, as well as guidance on keeping under-fives safe online.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety> - National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) has guidance for parents and carers to help keep children safe online.

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers> - UK Safer Internet Centre provides tips and advice for parents and carers to keep children safe online - you can also report any harmful content found online through the UK Safer Internet Centre.

Online Gaming

Talk to your children.

REMEMBER – knowledge is power!

Online games like Fortnite, Minecraft and Roblox can let young people play with their friends, family and strangers from around the world. But playing with people online can be risky. Before young people start playing games online there are a few things to consider.

You can find more help, advice and information online.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/online-safety-guide-6-10-year-olds/>



Choose a safe username. This seems simple, but it can give away so much.

Make sure you:

- Do not use their real name
- Do not use their school name
- Do not use anything relating to your address
- Do not use their birthday

If they are able to use a profile picture, try using an avatar that does not show their face. If you do use a picture, think about whether it shows anything that could be used to identify them, like their school logo, street name or something in the background.

What is safe to talk about online?

Games are a great way to make friends online. But it is important to talk to your young people about how much they are sharing about themselves.

Do they know they should never give their:

- Address
- Age
- Phone number
- Where they go to school
- Their full name
- Passwords

People are clever – they can keep track of all the small things they have heard over time to create a big picture.

Who are they playing with?

Most online games are open to everyone, that means they could be playing with people much younger or older than them.

It is important young people understand that if they are playing with people online:

- They can always report and mute anyone who is nasty
- People might not always be telling the truth about who they are
- Do not accept gifts or offers from people online – this could be a trick
- Always be nice to the people you are playing with – treat them how you would like to be treated
- Talk to your parents/carers or an adult you trust if you are worried about anything you see, hear or are asked to do

Check your privacy settings

Changing privacy settings will protect your children.

Privacy settings can affect:

- Who can see when they are online
- Who they can play with
- Whether people can see what games they are playing
- Who can see their location

Every game and console is different, so make sure you always check the settings to see what your options are. Click this link for more help and advice:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/>

Loot boxes and in-app purchases

Lots of games are free-to-play, so you can download and start them without paying anything. Games like this make money by making you want to buy things, like new skins, loot boxes, items or lives.

These in-app purchases are tempting and easy to purchase. Devices can be set up so that a password is required before an online purchase can be made. If you do not want your child to purchase anything, then make sure that your card details are not saved to a device or to things like the Cloud.

Also make sure your children know:

- Things they buy in the game WILL cost real world money
- Always ask the person who will be paying for their permission
- Keep track of what they are spending, even if they are buying cheaper things they can end up costing a lot
- Do not buy items from websites outside of the game itself
- Take a break from the game before deciding to buy something

Think before you click!

Cyberbullying

What is cyber bullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like mobile phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. 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.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social Media
- Text messaging and messaging apps on mobile or tablet devices
- Instant messaging, direct messaging, and online chatting over the internet
- Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards
- Email
- Online gaming communities

Unfortunately, with the majority of learning now being online, bullying can follow people wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and messaging.

When should I report bullying to the police?

Many incidents of bullying are not actually crimes and can be dealt with by school. It is important to speak to a trusted adult if you think you, or someone you know is being bullied so they can give support and help.

Police may become involved in incidents of bullying where there is any:

- Violence
- Theft
- Harassment and intimidation over a period of time
- Hate crimes or hate incidents

If bullying is happening online, then the other person can be blocked, reported to the site/app and screenshots can be taken to show school.

Remember: always be kind.

Never say hurtful things to others. Words can really hurt

<https://www.bullying.co.uk/>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

COVID-19 has changed things for us all, especially for children. Lockdown has meant that many of them cannot go to school, cannot see friends and family and have to keep in touch with people and school work online.

If your child, is worried about something, or sees or experiences something online that concerns them, it is important they can speak to someone they trust as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

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