Online Safety

We are in unprecedented times. As schools close and people are confined to their homes due to the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we are using the internet and online services more now than perhaps ever before. Being online is providing a lifeline for everyone in society from the young to the old, learners and workers, and the vulnerable, curious and those seeking an escape from boredom. During this period of isolation at homes around the country, it is vitally important that Online Safety (keeping children safe online) is taken very seriously, treating it as a safeguarding and education issue.

Online Safety at home following the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Online Safety isn't just part of school life, it is also relevant at home and we would encourage you to have an open dialogue with your children about rules for computer use, internet access and parental controls which should be set on all devices the children have access to.

With technology evolving and becoming more accessible every day, we appreciate as a parent it is scary allowing your child to use social media and browse the internet.

We are aware that many children feel peer-pressure to use social media before retrictions advise they are old enough to do so. To help support you and build your child's ditigal resilience, some useful websites are listed below as well as some top tips to ensure your child stays safe online:

- Restrict in-app purchases
- Check what Apps your child is downloading
- Enable restrictions on their iphone/ipad
- Communicate with your child – know what they are up to online, who they are contacting and ask yourself is their behaviour acceptable?

Talking with children about their technology use

As always, it's important to have open and honest conversations with children about what they are doing online, and especially so at this point in time when they might be making more extensive use of technology. Check in on their technology use regularly – find out about what they are doing online, who they are talking to, how their online learning is going (as set by the school or done independently), and what new tools and apps they might be using. Take time to select new tools and content together, and discuss why certain tools, apps or content might not be appropriate. Be mindful of any age restrictions on apps and platforms too; those restrictions are there for a reason.

Equally keep the lines of conversation open for children if they have any concerns about anything they might have encountered online; let them know that they can

discuss any issues and that you'll find a solution together. As with discussing the COVID-19 situation generally, again it might be useful to find time each day to talk about how things have gone online, and perhaps even to share a couple of more uplifting pieces of content each of you have found or used that day.

Be mindful of online contacts and connections

Clearly social media platforms provide an excellent way to keep in touch; something which is vital given the fact that so many of us are having to socially distance ourselves for the foreseeable future. It is worth reiterating, however, that social media can also open up the possibility of communicating with strangers – this is not in itself a bad thing (depending on the age of the users), but children should remember that they can never fully be aware of who they are talking to online, and that they are free to shut down any conversations which make them feel uncomfortable in any way. As with general online safety advice, children should talk to their parent or carer if this is the case.

Government support to help keep you child safe online during the period of COVID-19.

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)