

The invention of the internet, social network and streaming technology mean that children and young people use technology in amazing ways and achieve amazing things. With the power of the internet, children can create their own websites, music, videos, and images and upload and share them online with friends, family or the whole world. Thanks to mobile phones, laptops and handheld devices such as portable music players and games consoles, they can access the internet from any location, at any time.

Understanding the risks

As parents, you may not use these technologies in the same way as your children, but you do need to understand what they are doing, what the risks might be, and how you can help them to keep themselves safe online.

As a school, we are already doing a lot to help keep children safe online and to help teach pupils about how to use technology safely. However, we all have a role to play, and you can help to support this vital work by:

- Learning about the benefits and risks of using the internet and other mobile technologies.
- Discussing eSafety concerns with your children
- Showing an interest in how your children are using technology
- Encouraging them to behave safely and responsibly when using technology
- Modelling safe and responsible behaviours in your own use of technology

If you have any concerns about your children's use of technology, please don't be afraid to **contact us** we will be happy to offer any support and guidance we can.

In the meantime, here are our five top tips for helping to keep your children safe online:

1. **Talk - Talk** with your children about what they are doing online. Find out which websites they visit and how they communicate with their friends online. Are they using instant messaging programs like MSN Messenger, or are they texting their friends using their mobile phone. Make sure your children know they can come and talk to you or another trusted adult if they are worried or upset about anything that happens online.
2. **Rules** - Together with your children, draw up a set of responsible rules about using the internet that the whole family agrees to. Think about what is reasonable for the age of your children, and make sure they are balancing the amount of time they spend online with the amount of time they spend on other activities.
3. **Keep Info Safe** - Make sure your children understand the importance of keeping their personal information safe. Posting personal information on websites, or sending messages, can lead to strangers getting hold of their details. Items of personal information, such as: full name, address, telephone numbers, photographs and school name should all be kept secret and should not be posted online. Encourage your children to think about who else might be able to see what they post on websites or send in emails and other messages.

4. **Keep an Eye Out** - Keep the family computer in an area where you can keep an eye on your children as they use it. Remember that children can also access the internet from other devices such as mobile phones, portable music players and games consoles. As children get older and you feel it is appropriate for them to have a computer in their bedroom, or a laptop that they can carry around, consider installing suitable safety software that will alert you if they do something that might put them in danger. There are several commercial software products that will do this for you.
5. **Meetings** - The internet allows young people to make new friends from across the country and even across the world, allowing them to learn about new cultures and new places. However, make sure your children know that they should never meet anyone that they only know online, unless they take you or another responsible adult with them.

Useful Websites for Parents

Know IT All for Parents - www.childnet.com/resources/know-it-all-for-parents

This website provides a unique, interactive guide to help you keep up to date with how children use the Internet and how you can support them in keeping safe. It is produced by ChildNet International.

ThinkUKnow for Parents – www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/

This website, from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, has a section dedicated to parents with lots of useful advice. In particular check out the parent webcast!

Social Networking - www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/hot-topics/social-networking

This website, from ChildNet International, gives some useful advice on social networking, which lots of young people use on a daily basis.

NSPCC Advice for Parents - www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/

The NSPCC website has a section for parents with advice on Internet safety.

Mobile phone safety - www.kidsmart.org.uk/downloads/mobiles.pdf

This download from kidsmart.org is full of useful tips and questions to consider when buying your child a mobile phone.

Connect Safely - www.connectsafely.org/

This website is American, but contains useful information for parents on how young people are using technology, and what the risks may be.

Get Net Wise - www.getnetwise.org/

As well as lots of information on how to keep your children safe, this website has a very useful video tutorial showing how you can set privacy settings and parental controls on your computer.