

Online Safety

In the age of smart phones, tablets and social networking your children are online more than ever. Whilst there are lots of benefits in this digital age, there are lots of dangers. As parents you can do many things to protect your children online.

A helpful website is www.getsafeonline.org and <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Advice includes;

- It's never too late to reinforce boundaries ... your child may think they are adult enough, but they definitely still need your wisdom and guidance.
- You may be starting to think your child knows more about using technology than you do, and you may be right. Make it your business to keep up to date and discuss what you know with your child.
- Talk frankly to your child about how they explore issues related to the health, wellbeing, body image and sexuality of themselves and others online. They may be discovering inaccurate or dangerous information on online at what is a vulnerable time in their lives.
- Review the settings on parental controls in line with your child's age and maturity and adjust them if appropriate. They may ask you to trust them sufficiently to turn them off completely, but think carefully before you do and agree in advance what is acceptable online behaviour.
- Also talk frankly to your child about how they behave towards others, particularly with regard to what they post online. Be willing to have frank conversations about bullying, and posting hurtful, misleading or untrue comments. Make them aware of the dangers of behaviours like sexting and inappropriate use of webcams.
- Give your child control of their own budget for activities like downloading apps and music, but agree boundaries beforehand so that they manage their money responsibly. Don't give them access to your payment card or other financial details.
- Be clear in your own mind on issues such as copyrighted material and plagiarism so that you can explain to your child what is legal and what isn't.
- If your child has the technological know-how - and with sufficient influence from others - they could be vulnerable to experimenting with accessing confidential information from the websites of other people or companies. Hacking amongst this age group is very rare, but it does exist. Explain the dangers and consequences.

Here are some questions you could discuss with your children, now that they are older:

- Do you really know everybody on your 'friends' list?
- Do you know how to use and set privacy and security settings? Can you show me how?
- Do you ever get messages from strangers? If so, how do you handle them?
- Do you know anyone who has made plans to meet someone offline that they've only ever spoken to online?

- Are people in your group of friends ever mean to each other, or to other people, online or on phones? If so, what do they say? Has anyone ever been mean to you? Would you tell me about it if they were?

The Best Approach

Our advice, which follows that of experts the world over, is to take a balanced approach to your children's online safety. Doing nothing is a sure-fire way to let your kids get into trouble, whilst a heavy-handed approach will make them all the more determined to do the opposite of what you tell them (as with most things in life when it comes to kids!)



QUESTION ABOUT KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE ONLINE?
FREE ADVICE on 0207 744 0022
9am - 9pm Monday to Friday*

The advertisement features a teal background with white text. To the right of the text is a photograph of three children sitting at a desk, looking at a computer monitor.

If children have worries about online safety at school they should contact their Head of Learning.

They can also use the 'CEOP report abuse' button on the homepage of our website.

