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Your child and online safety outside of school

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Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been brought to my attention that some of our children are using internet sites and games, including those with options for chatting online. In addition, 'fake' accounts are being set up and used. I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of some essentials in helping your children to take care of themselves online as well as supporting you with your responsibilities as their parent or carer.

What can you do to help your child?

Make sure that your children know that they can come and talk to you (without necessarily getting into trouble) if they see anything that worries them on the internet, and encourage them to feel confident enough to do so. Other immediate strategies to deal with unwanted content or contact could include; switch the screen off, close the laptop, exit the website, or turn the iPad or phone over and put it down.

What are your responsibilities?

Children can be enthusiastic users of technology. The challenge can be to harness this enthusiasm and ensure a balance, so that the use of technology does not negatively impact on other important areas of young children's lives. Some strategies that can help manage time online include agreeing time limits or using time limiting tools, designating weekly times to use the internet together, or removing portable devices from your child's bedroom at night to avoid tiredness. In addition, it is also useful for you to know that certain sites and apps have a recommended age and eligibility policy in place, for example:

- **Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat** requires everyone to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account. Creating an account with false information is a violation of the terms and conditions. This includes accounts registered on the behalf of someone under 13.
- **Musically** states that *THE SERVICE IS NOT FOR PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 13 OR FOR ANY USERS PREVIOUSLY SUSPENDED OR REMOVED FROM THE SERVICE BY MUSICAL.LY. IF YOU ARE UNDER 13 YEARS OF AGE, YOU MUST NOT USE OR ACCESS THE SERVICE AT ANY TIME OR IN ANY MANNER.*

Do You Know Who Your Child Speaks to Online?

The Internet is a wonderful place for children to play, learn, create and connect - opening up a whole world of exciting possibilities. But how do you keep track of what they're doing and make sure they're staying safe and being responsible themselves?

In terms of the games being played, the game itself should have a PEGI age rating. Age ratings are systems used to ensure that content, such as films, videos, DVDs, and computer games, are clearly labelled for the age group for which they are most suitable. Age ratings provide guidance to parents and carers to help them decide whether or not children should be using a particular game or not.

Many of the games children play online involve playing the games with others, often with strangers they have only "met" online. It is important that they know how to stay safe, for instance by not giving out personal information. They should also know that they need to be kind online and not get involved in bullying or treating others badly.

It is really important to chat with your children on an ongoing basis about staying safe online. If you are not sure where to begin, these conversation starters can help.

- Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.
- Ask them about how they stay safe online. What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?

There is loads of information and support online. These sites are great for parents and children:

- <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>
- <http://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers>

The NSPCC has a range of resources, including this guide to the social networks children use

- <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

As a school, we will continue to hold Online Safety sessions for parents and carers throughout the year - as we have already done so far this year. If we can be of any assistance, please come along and talk to us.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Hague
Headteacher