

Ashton Vale Primary School

Dear Parents and Carers,

The school has an on going commitment to internet safety which is integral in our curriculum and, as part of this, we celebrated Internet Safety day last month. This involved assemblies, activities in class and a visit from our local PCSO.

It provided us an opportunity to have frank and open conversations with our children about their lives online. A few issues arose out of this that I felt should be highlighted to you now.

At home, our children are Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram users (the minimum user age for these sites is **13 years of age**) to name but a few. They take part in online gaming, as well as using the internet to find out information, listen to music, watch films etc. They are 'digital natives' and this is an integral part of their life.

It is our job as parents and teachers to ensure that their use of the internet is as safe as possible. We need to be alert to the risks that we should be guarding against.

These are in the form of:

- The **content** that they see online
This could be aggressive, sexual, racist, biased or giving misleading advice
- The **contact** that they make with others
Bullying, harassment, sexting, strangers who could groom them, people who could introduce them to self harm etc
- The **conduct** that they themselves carry out, and the conduct of others.
Creating and uploading inappropriate material, giving or receiving misleading information, illegal downloading, gambling.

The risks include:

1. giving out their personal information
2. encountering pornography
3. cyber bullying
4. receiving unwanted sexual comments
5. meeting an online contact

So how can we help them?

- Have a discussion with your child.

We need to make sure that children are aware of the **scale** of the internet – it's global and, if they have not changed their settings on Facebook etc, their photos and posts will be available to **anyone** online.

They need to think about the **audience** that can see their content and how people can access information about themselves, their family and where they live and play.

Their internet posts are **permanent** – when it's put on line, **it will always be there, even if you delete it.**

- Parental controls

Facebook, Google, twitter and YouTube all have safety centres (just go to the sites search for safety centre) and parental controls that you can use. Networks themselves can be filtered (so that all devices in your home have the same controls rather than adapting each one individually) – certainly the big 4 suppliers are all starting to offer this – login and check.

- Make a family agreement

This doesn't need to be formal or written down, but an honest discussion about how you expect them to behave on line- what is acceptable for you and what is not. Should you have a digital curfew? (When all of their digital devices are handed to you at night so that they can get some sleep!).

- What to do if you have a problem

Ask your child to write down their pass codes etc and seal them in an envelope – they still have their privacy but you are able to access sites if there is an emergency.

- Are you a positive digital role model?

Consider the type of user that you are and what you are teaching your children.

Where can you get help?

You can report any misuse of Facebook, etc on their sites
If you feel that a child is at a serious risk of harm, contact CEOP
(**Child Exploitation and Online Protection**)



Parental support can also be found at –

Digital Parenting (an online magazine with tips and advice)

http://www.vodafone.com/content/parents/digital-parenting/view_magazines.html

Cyber mentors,

Childnet International

UK safer internet centre

South West Grid for Learning

Think U know

Family online safety Institute



If you would like to discuss anything about Internet safety and online parenting, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Regards

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