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Ensuring an excellent child-centred education within a Christ centred philosophy

E-Safety Newsletter

Term 5

Dear Parent/Carer,

Welcome to the fifth of our termly newsletters on E-Safety. We hope that the advice passed on to you so far this year has allowed you to engage with your child's online activity. The more transparent their internet use is at home, the better their online experiences will be.

As a school, we embrace the internet and the many engaging activities and learning experiences it has to offer. The online world is an unavoidable element of life in the modern world, particularly for young people. To try and deny access to the internet would not only be near impossible, it would also rob the children of a wealth of useful information.

However, the internet is vast and incredibly difficult to regulate. It is open to anyone to post and create content so sometimes your child may see things they wish they hadn't, or access sites inappropriate to their age. The definition of inappropriate will vary according to different families: from swear words to graphic images. What is inappropriate will also change as your child grows and develops. It would be naïve to assume that children will fortuitously avoid any and all content which we deem to be inappropriate for their age group.

Inside:

Inappropriate content and how to avoid it

How to Deal With and Avoid Inappropriate Content

There are a range of things online that might upset children and affect what should be a healthy online experience. It's important to remember that inappropriate online content is not limited to graphic images; it could also include sites promoting issues such as racist attitudes and gambling.

If your child is using the internet, you should discuss the type of things they might see, no matter what age they are. It is natural for children to push boundaries and they are likely to explore areas of curiosity on the internet. However, the internet is no match for parents as educators! It may be difficult but it is important to discuss inappropriate content that children may have accessed as it can often provide an unrealistic portrayal.

This is an important approach to maintain when children accidentally stumble across inappropriate content. Such incidents are unavoidable – it even happens in school occasionally! Fortunately, our children are responsible and quick to report the outcomes of these accidents.

So what can you do at home to minimise the risk of finding inappropriate content?

Set Age Appropriate Controls

Parental controls packages can enable you to block access to adult websites. Contact the provider of your internet package (Sky, BT, Virgin etc.) – the majority of service providers now offer free parental controls packages. Make sure you do the same on your child's phone and all internet enabled devices.

Check EVERYTHING with Online Content

The assumption is often made that filter settings need only be altered on laptops/tablets etc. Don't forget that many of us now access TV content through providers such as Netflix and BBC iPlayer.

You must remember to alter settings on these sites too or your children will have unrestricted access to content suitable only for adults.

Safe Searching

Another regularly used element of the internet is Google. You were shown how to filter for safe searches in Google back in the first newsletter of the year.

Here is a reminder:

Settings – Search Settings – Tick 'Filter explicit results' – Save

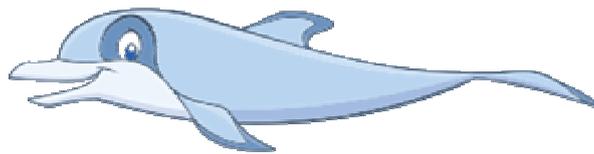
Have a Procedure for when Accidents Happen

Children will find something online that you would rather they hadn't. There is a possibility that they may find something which upsets them. Have ongoing conversations with your child about online content and offer them help and support if they see something that makes them uncomfortable. Make it clear that accidents happen and it's not their fault.

As mentioned in a previous newsletter, we use 'Hector the Protector' at school. This child friendly logo allows the children to cover the screen when these accidents happen, leaving the website open for an adult to check later on.

Hector is free to download and available at:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk/5_7/hector/world/Hector-World-Safety-Button/



Poorly Regulated Sites

Despite your best efforts as parents, many websites have weak safeguards to ensure young people do not access their content. Quite often, the regulation only stretches as far as a button to click confirming that 'I am 18 years or older'.

Talk to your children about these websites and why they are deemed inappropriate for young people. Aside from the obvious issues, children may not be aware of the financial issues connected with gambling/gaming sites; we've all seen the stories on the news of children with unrestricted iPad access spending thousands of pounds on 'virtual food' for their farm games!



Learn How to Report any Illegal Content Found Online

It is highly unlikely that your children will accidentally access illegal content. If you have put the previously mentioned measures into place then you will see many hours of happy surfing!

However, should you find anything which you feel should be reported then please contact the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre at:

www.ceop.police.uk



Given the possible dangers, it is natural for parents to feel that they should protect their children from the internet. Sometimes we even become angry at children for what they have found, simply because we didn't know how to prevent it. However, the best thing you can do for your child is to teach them how to use the internet safely and transparently. If there is anything we can do to assist you in this process, please don't hesitate to speak to a member of staff.

For further help and guidance please visit:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents

Yours sincerely,

S Groves