



E-Safety Newsletter: December 2021

Dear Families,

It is that time of the year when many of our children are writing or have written their present list to Father Christmas, and in the majority of cases there will be the expectation of an electronic device or computer game. With that in mind, we have pulled together some information to support your decisions and ensure our children stay safe.

Video games:

Video games provide a great opportunity for creative play and cognitive development, but it can be a challenge for parents in ensuring that the content of the game is suitable. Video games have evolved a lot since I was a child, with my Commodore 64- and 8-bit graphics, and have now become immersive and interactive. This makes it vitally important that what we allow our children to experience is appropriate for their development and wellbeing. As adults, we can separate fantasy from reality but for many of our children, the level of detail presented makes it much harder. What we perceive as harmless fun can be traumatic for a child.

To support us, PEGI (Pan European Game Information) and the ESRB (Entertainment Software Ratings Board) provide an age rating system and content descriptors, which gives a guide on the content of the game and its suitability when making a purchase. It is important that you are aware of the games' content before you let any child play it.

PEGI - for more information visit: pegi.info



ESRB – for more information visit: esrb.org



Walk throughs:

Linked to playing video games are 'walk throughs', this is when a gamer will post footage of them playing the game (walking and talking the audience through the stages) onto social media. This has become a popular form of entertainment, with gaming influencers drawing in millions of views and subscribers. Many young children know about games that are age inappropriate through watching other people play them. This is not just through social media; it could be watching a parent or older sibling play. It is worth considering that although they are not playing the game, they are still exposed to the content, albeit in a passive capacity, which can still upset younger children.

Staying Safe Online:

Over 4 in 5 children (82%) aged 3-4 went online and 93% of children aged 5-7 went online in 2020 (Ofcom). Considering that our children are online from such a young age, it is important that we equip them with the skills to stay safe and know what to do if something happens that they were not expecting.

According to the NSPCC, many of us see our online presence and our offline lives as different.



However, for children growing up with technology there is not a distinction, being online and offline is life. It can be difficult to know how to start talking about what your child is doing online, the vocabulary they use can be confusing and technologies are changing

all the time. But talking to your child regularly is the greatest tool to help them stay safe online.

Here are five tips for your conversation:

- Reassure them
- Try not to treat it like an interview
- Ask who they are talking to
- Remind them about strangers.



Some conversations are going to be more difficult than others, for support, strategies and more information please visit: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>

Childline recommend that computers and consoles are set up in communal parts of the house and young children should not be using devices unsupervised.

Their website suggests the following tips to stay safe online:

- Think before you post
- Don't share personal details
- Watch out for phishing and scams
- Think about who you are talking to
- Keep your device secure
- Never give out your password
- Cover your webcam

For details on any of these tips, please visit: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/staying-safe-online/>

Mobile Phones/Tablets/Games Consoles

More than half of children aged 10 have their own smart phone. By age 13, almost all (95%) have a smartphone (Ofcom). The number of children owning a tablet (40% of six year olds) decreases because as children get older, most will ask for their own smartphone as it offers the ability to be connected to the internet wherever they are. Therefore, it is important to consider what you are happy for them to do online, as well as the costs this incurs.

The vast majority of devices arrive with the factory default settings. This means that parental controls will not be enabled, and your child has access to all the device's features. Many parents are put off using controls and settings because they think they difficult to set up, or complicated to use.



The website: <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/> is excellent at providing step by step guides. You select the device or social media platform, and it takes you through how to secure the device.

Some things to consider:

- Use the device settings so you can only download age-appropriate apps
- Disable location services so your child does not unintentionally share their location with others.
- Set up password control or disable in-app purchasing so that you are not faced with a big bill.
- Download age-appropriate apps yourself

Additional support

If you have any concerns, then please speak to your class teacher or contact the office. We can support you in finding a solution.

Alternatively, the below are some excellent websites:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/staying-safe-online/>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/>

<https://pegi.info>

<https://esrb.org>

I hope you find this information useful and wish you all a safe and happy Christmas.

Mr. Fleming

E-Safety and Computing Curriculum Leader