



INTERNET SAFETY ADVICE FOR JUNIOR PARENTS

All of our pupils are taught at some stage how to research on the internet and to evaluate sources. Not only does this technological revolution give young people unrivalled opportunities, it also brings risk. This booklet is designed to give parents more information about what we do in school to help keep children safe, and to provide parents with some practical advice about how they can support our efforts in this area at home.

WHAT WE DO IN SCHOOL:

- It is an important part of our role at Oakwood to teach our pupils how to stay safe in this environment and how to avoid making themselves vulnerable to a range of risks, including identity theft, cyber-bullying, harassment, grooming, radicalisation, stalking and abuse.
- Children's use of the internet at school is always supervised, and all computers have an appropriate filter. Using the internet safely is often discussed during lessons throughout the school.
- Our Designated Safeguarding Leads have received appropriate training in the safety issues involved with the misuse of the internet and other mobile electronic devices. We seek to work closely with parents in promoting a culture of e-safety, and we will always share any concerns we may have about a child's behaviour in this area with parents.
- All the children take part in the annual Safer Internet Day, and pupils are encouraged to make use of various online resources that are available from specific internet safety sites (listed in the following section).
- Teachers discuss the 'Acceptable Use guidelines' with their class during the first Computing lesson of the year, using age-appropriate language and those items applicable to a particular class. Pupils & parents are asked to sign this.

Background

The internet is a 'place' where your children mix with others and share their lives. Just as in any other area of life, if you don't know what your children are doing, where they are going or who they are mixing with, you risk compromising their safety.

Thankfully the 'grooming' of youngsters on the internet remains rare, however it is nevertheless important to be vigilant. Remember that an adult using a social networking site can become anyone they want to be when they are online.

Despite its lower profile, internet bullying occurs more frequently than grooming. Threats, harassment and psychological torment via email or in a virtual chatroom can have a devastating effect on a child.

Social networking sites

The main focus of this booklet is on general internet and email use, and as it is not recommended that children of primary school age have access to social networking sites this will only be mentioned briefly. As children enter secondary school you will need to be aware of these relevant issues which will affect them as they get older. Some parents may have seen an article in the Telegraph which reported on research carried out in the Netherlands about the impact of Facebook on exam results. The research suggests that students who use Facebook while studying for exams scored on average 20 percent lower than people who did not use Facebook while working. We cannot comment on the veracity of the research but it certainly raises questions that we at school, and perhaps some parents, may want to discuss with our children.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO AT HOME:

- Firstly you need to discuss as a family whether you feel your child is old enough to be using the internet. There is no 'right' or minimum legal age for this, but you need to consider whether your child is mature enough to be able to cope with any risks and if you have the time to provide the necessary supervision. There is, however, a minimum age for subscribing to certain social networking sites.
- Discuss with your child any rules for internet use, for example you might want to restrict use to 1 hour per day, or weekends only, or before a certain time at night. As parents you need to be in control and ensure that they adhere to any rules agreed upon.
- Ensure you have an appropriate filter installed on your home computer (eg. Optenet or Net Nanny. Norton also have this as an add-on to their normal anti-virus software). This parental control software will allow you to block access to certain types of websites, to restrict use at certain times or to log your

child's internet activity. It can also prevent email traffic from undesirable sources.

- It is not recommended for children under the age of 10 to have their own email address. However when they do get one, keep the following in mind particularly during the initial period: Consider asking them to give you their password so you could potentially check any messages (you will need to explain that this is not to invade their privacy, but merely to protect them while they are still 'new' users); ask them to tell you if an unknown person sends them an email so you can delete it and block their address; tell them not to forward 'chain' emails to their friends as this may give others access to their address book; tell them not to divulge ANY personal information in an email or on their profile; don't let them use a webcam with people they don't know personally.
- Your home computer should preferably be in an area of the house where you frequently visit (eg. a family room or living room/kitchen area) rather than upstairs or in a spare bedroom.
- Learn as much as possible about what your child does online. Ask them to show you the sites they have visited and to tell you who they have exchanged messages with. They may not reveal everything but it's a good start - at least they will know you are interested.
- Check the history of sites your child has visited, and be explicit that you will do this regularly. If the history has been deleted, ask them why.
- Talk to other parents about the rules they have for their children and share good ideas.
- Children of primary school age should not be posting pictures of themselves on social networking sites - there is plenty of time for this in secondary school. Parents need to decide at what age they would feel comfortable with this. However you also need to remember that you do not have control over what your children's friends post on the internet and that they may well be included in group photos.
- Be aware of how, when and where your child uses the internet. This will help you to spot any significant changes, for example if they spend much longer online than usual, or they start using the internet only away from home. This may well be nothing more than typical adolescent behaviour, but at least you will be alert to other possibilities.
- If possible, block pop ups on all internet sites as these are unnecessary distractions and might have inappropriate content.
- Look out for changes that may signal your child is being bullied or harassed. These can include loss of confidence, withdrawal from family life, anxiety or argumentativeness, insomnia or lack of concentration.
- Visit some of the following internet sites which have useful resources for both parents and children: www.thinkuknow.co.uk ; www.childnet-int.org ; www.cyberbullying.org; www.cybermentors.org.uk; www.digizen.org.uk

KEEP SMART, KEEP SAFE!

Encourage your child to follow the 5 SMART rules when using the internet and mobile phones:

S SAFE:

Keep safe by being careful not to give out personal information - such as your full name, email address, phone number, home address, photos or school name - to people you are chatting with online.

M MEET:

Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents' permission and even then only when they can be present.

A ACCEPTING:

Accepting emails, instant messages or opening files, pictures or texts from people you don't know or trust can lead to problems - they may contain viruses or nasty messages!

R RELIABLE:

Information you find on the internet may not be true, or someone online may be lying about who they are. Make sure you check information before you believe it.

T TELL:

Tell your parent or another trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.