

Watling Street School - E-Safety for Parents

Our children use technology in amazing ways, and achieve incredible things, as computers open up new possibilities that we never had when we were growing up. With the power of the internet, children can create their own websites, music, videos, and images and upload and share them online with friends, family or the whole world. Thanks to mobile phones, laptops and handheld devices such as portable music players and games consoles, they can access the internet from any location, at any time.

Understanding the risks

As parents, we may not use the internet and other technologies in the same way as our children, but we do need to understand what they are doing, what the risks might be, and how we can help them to keep themselves safe.

As a school, we are already doing a lot to help keep children safe online and to help teach pupils about how to use technology safely. However, we all have a role to play, and parents can help by:

- Learning about the benefits and risks of using the internet and other mobile technologies.
- Discussing e-safety concerns with our children
- Showing an interest in how they are using technology
- Encouraging them to behave safely and responsibly when using technology
- Modeling safe and responsible behaviours in our own use of technology

If you have any concerns about your children's use of technology, please don't be afraid to contact us.

Here's our five top tips for helping to keep your children safe using the Internet:

Talk - Talk with your children about what they are doing online. Find out which websites they visit and how they communicate with their friends online. Children are easily able to bend the age rules of Facebook etc, and often do not understand the possible dangers of giving out too much information online. Are they using instant messaging programs like MSN Messenger, are they texting their friends using their mobile phone. Make sure your children know they can come and talk to you if they are worried or upset about anything that happens online.

Common Sense Approach - In the same way that most people we meet in real life are very nice, so are most people we meet online. However, because we are sitting in our warm safe home, we often do things online that we would never do in the street. Would we tell a stranger our full name, date of birth, our online passwords, phone number, where we live, where we go to school, the path we take through the park etc etc??? Remind your children that they should never give out personal information like this online. Encourage your children to think about who else might be able to see what they post on websites, or send in emails and other messages. Remind them that once they put anything online it stays online *forever!* Any photo they ever send by MMS or email, or whatever means, can be retrieved *forever!*

Rules - Together with your children, draw up a set of responsible rules about using the internet that the whole family agrees to. Think about what is reasonable for the age of your children, and make sure they are balancing the amount of time they spend online with the amount of time they spend on other activities. You might want to ask us at school for a copy of the rules we use and base yours on that.

Keep an Eye Out - Keep the family computer in an area where you can keep an eye on your children as they use it. Remember that they can also access the internet from other devices such as mobile phones, portable music players and games consoles. As children get older and you feel it is appropriate for them to have a computer in their bedroom, or a laptop that they can carry around, consider installing suitable safety software that will alert you if they do something that might put them in danger. There are several commercial software products that will do this for you.

Meeting online friends - The internet allows young people to make new friends from anywhere. The huge majority of these online friends are nice, normal children like our own. However, some children are silly enough to arrange to meet some of these new friends without telling their parents - remind them that it is very easy for anyone online to copy a photo, and then to

pretend he or she is a ten-year old school pupil. If your children really do want to meet an online friend, go with them!

Passwords

A quick note about online passwords - how safe are yours? Most passwords are PETS or CHILDREN, how easy are yours to guess???

Useful Websites for Parents:

Have a look at these, they contain some superb ideas and advice.

"Know IT All for Parents"

This website provides a unique, interactive guide to help you keep up to date with how children use the Internet and how you can support them in keeping safe. It is produced by ChildNet International.

"ThinkUKnow for Parents"

This website, from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, has a section dedicated to parents with lots of useful advice. In particular check out the parent webcast!

"MyGuide"

The MyGuide website provides a range of free online courses to help adults who are less confident users of computers and technology. As well as a whole range of general courses, the site includes courses on keeping yourself and your family safe online.

"Social Networking"

This website, from ChildNet International, gives some useful advice on social networking, which lots of young people use on a daily basis.

"NSPCC Advice for Parents"

The NSPCC website has a section for parents with advice on Internet safety.

"T-Mobile Guide to Mobile Phone Safety"

This section of the T-Mobile website has useful advice regarding mobile phone safety for parents.

"Connect Safely"

This website is American, but contains useful information for parents on how young people are using technology, and what the risks may be.

"Get Net Wise"

As well as lots of information on how to keep your children safe, this website has a very useful video tutorial showing how you can set privacy settings and parental controls on your computer.