



Online Safety and the use of social media

There have been several news stories in recent weeks about the potential dangers of children having such easy access to the internet. Technology is a wonderful thing and, at this time of year, a new phone, or tablet will be a popular Christmas present wish list request; however, devices like these need to be used responsibly, and keeping children safe online is extremely important.

One key area of concern is the use of social media. Apps like 'Snapchat' and 'Instagram' are extremely popular with children and, these days, the main means of communication between them. However, using media messaging services like these can cause problems for young people, not just now, but in the future.



It is important for children to understand that any messages posted online are likely to be read by a wide range of people and, if they decide to post something offensive or unpleasant, this could be used against them at a later date. Technology these days means that all of us, willingly or not, are creating a 'digital footprint' and this includes a record of the sites we visit, the images and videos we view and the messages we post online. Please support the school by asking your children about their use of social media and the internet and by making sure that security and firewall settings are up-to-date and set at the correct age-appropriate level for all internet users in the family.

To help you with this, the link below will take you to a webpage written specifically for parents:

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

In addition, the guide below is aimed at supporting parents whose children have already placed themselves in risky situations online, including viewing pornography and sharing images of a sexual nature. This 'parent pack' provides a range of helpful information and useful advice for parents and will help you to engage in conversations about your child's use of the internet and social media:

[http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/files/Parents%20Pack Whats%20the%20problem 11Mar2015.pdf](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/files/Parents%20Pack%20Whats%20the%20problem%2011Mar2015.pdf)

E-safety is an important part of keeping children safe at The Windsor Boys' School and we have extensive security measures in place in school to help safeguard pupils from potential dangers or unsuitable material. A new 'Smoothwall' security system has recently been added to the school network and this means that any unsuitable internet activity by students using the school wi-fi is blocked, tracked and monitored. This includes trying to access pornography, information linked to potential radicalisation, self-harm and suicide. If students misuse the school internet, an alert is immediately sent to a member of the school's safeguarding team, and this will be followed up by staff, with parents and other agencies involved too, if necessary.

Throughout the year, tutor time activities, assemblies and PSHE lessons are used to educate the students about the dangers of online safety also; however, to further embed the work done in school, please talk to your children about how they can keep safe and behave appropriately online. Please do your bit to support your child because we can only be successful in keeping children safe online if we all work together to ensure that the E-Safety message is consistent.

This week, the school received a message sent via Thames Valley Alert, on behalf of Thames Valley Police, relating to an explicit video being distributed via social media. We are aware of at least one student having knowledge of this video and the safeguarding team at the school have dealt with this issue; however, many other students may have accessed this video via social media. Please read the message below and discuss this with your son:



(Please do not reply or forward this email directly; please use the Reply, Share buttons at the bottom of this message)

Message sent by

Gareth Ford-Lloyd (Police, Communications, Thames Valley)

We are aware of an explicit video involving a child which has been distributed via social media. This is currently under investigation by Hampshire Constabulary.

If you have received this explicit video on Snapchat, Instagram or by any other means you must delete it immediately. If you show this video to someone else or forward it on to other people you could be committing a criminal offence, which the police may investigate and consider prosecution.

The people in the video have been identified and specialist police officers are supporting them to ensure their safety.

If you have any knowledge or relevant information related to who shared this video or how it was distributed, please contact Hampshire Constabulary on 101 as soon as possible.

Children who have been affected by this video are encouraged to speak to their parents, teachers or a trusted adult or can contact ChildLine on 0800 1111 for further support.

Further advice for both children and parents about how to stay safe online is available on the National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) command website:

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

This message highlights the dangers of social media and the internet and, sadly, in this digital age, children can accidentally or deliberately be exposed to unwanted or unpleasant content or comments online; however, there are steps you can take at home to minimise this risk. Outlined below are a few 'Golden Rules' for all parents to follow:

Ground Rules

Discuss as a family how the internet will be used in your house. Consider what should be kept private online (personal information, photos etc) and decide rules for making and meeting online friends. Make sure you know what your child is doing online, much like you would 'offline'.

Online Safety

Install antivirus software, secure your internet connection and use Parental Control functions for computers, mobile phones and games consoles to block unsuitable content or contact

Remember that parental control tools are not always 100% effective and sometimes unsuitable content can get past them, so don't rely on them alone to protect your child.

Location

Locate your computer in a supervised family area. Always supervise the use of webcams and applications which allow voice or video chat. Consider also your child's use of other devices that allow internet access such as Mobile Phones and Games Consoles.

Dialogue

Talk to your child and ask them to show or even teach you how they use the internet. Learn which websites or tools they like to use and why. Learning together can often open opportunities to discuss safe behaviour with your child.

Always ensure your child knows how to block or report people online who send nasty or inappropriate messages or content. Encourage your child not to retaliate or reply.

Make sure your child knows to tell an adult they trust if they see something online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable.

It's essential to be realistic - banning the internet or technology will not work and it often makes a child less likely to report a problem. Education around safe use is essential.

The following websites will provide you with further information and give you a range of other ideas about what things to discuss with your child and how best to be safe online:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Visit the "Parent/Carer" Section and use the "Click CEOP" button to seek advice and report online abuse

www.childnet.com

Visit the 'Know It All' Section for an interactive guide about online safety

To help support you further, the school is planning to run an E-safety information evening for parents early in the New Year, working across all four schools in the WLP trust. I have already asked the school police liaison officers to help with this and dates will be confirmed soon. I know that keeping up-to-date with technology and the latest trends involving school children can be quite daunting, and so this information evening should provide you with an opportunity to learn a few new things and meet the school staff and the local police in a welcoming and supportive environment. I look forward to meeting some of you soon at this information meeting; until then, thank you for your support in keeping The Windsor Boys' School students safe online.

Mr M J Rooke, Assistant Headteacher, The Windsor Boys' School