

Dear Parent,

The new academic year is now in full swing. This, of course, brings with it a higher level of work involving independent research on the internet.

Of course, the internet hosts many exciting opportunities for education. The online world is a wonderful place for young people to explore, with unprecedented opportunities for learning and creativity, but just like the real world there are risks and dangers that they should be aware of and which we should all act to protect them from. As a school we encourage the use of technology as an important part of our students' development but we do restrict usage to learning only through our 'Technology Downtime' programme. However, we have no control over what they do at home so that's where you come in.

Just a few simple steps can help to keep your child safe and also to empower them with the awareness to know what to do if they feel uncomfortable about anything that they encounter while on the internet.

By following this simple checklist, you can start to protect them and decrease the risks they face:

1. **Ask your child to show you sites that they use** – by doing so, your child is including you in their online life and social activity. Show an interest and take note of the names of their favourite sites. You can then re-visit these when you are alone. Take your time and explore the space, find out how to set the safety features and learn how to report any issues directly to the site.
2. **Set, or ask your child to set their profile settings to private** – social networking sites, such as Facebook, are used by children to share information, photos and just about everything they do! Encourage your child to set their privacy settings to private. They need to think about the information they post online as it could be copied and pasted anywhere, without permission. If it got into the wrong hands, somebody may wish to use it against them or worst of all try to locate them in the real world.

3. **Ask your child about their online friends** – we know that people lie online about who they are and may create fake identities. It is very important children understand this. Whether they are visiting a social network or a gaming site, the safety messages are the same. Children and young people must never give out personal information and only be 'friends' with people they know and trust in the real world.
4. **Set appropriate parental controls and filters on your child's computer, mobile and games console** – filters on computers and mobiles can prevent your child from viewing inappropriate and possibly illegal content. You can activate and change levels depending on your child's age and abilities. You can also set time restrictions for using the internet or games. They can be free and easy to install. Call your service provider who will be happy to assist or visit CEOP's parents' site for further information. Explain to your child why you are setting parental controls when you talk to them about their internet use.
5. **Discuss your child's usage and ask them to agree to tell you if they're worried about anything** – sometimes children get into situations online where they don't feel comfortable or see something they don't want to see. By opening up the communication channels and talking to your child about the internet, their favourite sites and the risks they may encounter, they are more likely to turn to you if they are concerned about something.
6. **Get help if you are concerned about your child** – the CEOP Safety Centre provides access to a range of services. If you are concerned that an adult has made inappropriate contact with your child you can report this directly to CEOP.

Visit the Safety Centre at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

Yours sincerely,

Tracy Knowles
Assistant Head