Online Safety Information for all Parents/Carers

These are difficult times and the safety of our children should be paramount. We know that mobile phones and computers are a part of everyday life for many children and young people. Used correctly, they are an exciting source of communication, fun and education but used incorrectly, or in the wrong hands they can be threatening and dangerous.

Of course, we should continue to encourage children to use technology, **but use it safely.** They also need to learn how to manage risks as they will have to all through their lives. Younger children will be much easier to supervise and you will decide if and when they should begin to use these technologies.

Risks include:

- Cyber-bulling, where hurtful texts or emails are sent to children.
- Children accidentally or deliberately accessing violent or sexually explicit websites, either on a computer or a mobile phone.
- Paedophiles talking to children by mobile phone or online and enticing them to engage in sexual conversations, photographs, video or actual meetings.

We all have a role to play in this process of using technology safely, but that role will differ depending on the age of the children. Research tells us that having a supportive parent or carer can make all the difference in helping a young person learn to stay safe.

Our young people are using technology to learn, play, socialise and express themselves in all types of creative ways. This may be through sharing photos and videos, blogging, gaming, or even developing their own apps. However, do you know who your children are sharing phots with and what these photos are? Do you know who they are talking to in chat rooms or as within games? Do you really know what's going on, or how late your children are using their phones in the evening?

It is critical therefore, in these times especially, that you are involved in keeping children safe on-line. To this end I have put together a brief checklist that may help with this process.

✓	I have talked to my child about the sties 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 time to explore the space, find out how to set the safety features and learn how to report any issues directly to the site
✓	I have checked that my child has 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! They need to think about the information they post as it could be copied and pasted anywhere, without their permission. If it got into the wrong hands, somebody may wish to use it to locate them in the real world.
✓	I have talked to my 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. Ensure that your child never give out personal information and only be "friends" with people they know and trust in the **real** world.
✓	I have set appropriate parental controls on my 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.** Call your Internet service provider who will be happy to assist. Explain to your child why you are setting parental controls when you talk to them about their internet use. **Many parents/carers take phone away at a certain time – say 9pm. This has been shown to aid mental well-being too**
✓	Encourage your child to tell you if they are worried about something online – 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
✓	As a Parent / Carer you know where to get help if you are concerned about your child. - If you are concerned that an adult has made inappropriate contact with your child you can report this directly to CEOP or the Police. You can also find help if you think your child is being bullied, or if you've come across something on the internet which you think may be illegal. Visit the Safety Centre at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre. If in doubt, talk to your child's school.

If you want to know more please visit: https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents OR contact your child's school