



E-Safety Matters

Our children inhabit an internet-enabled world and whilst this means breathtaking potential for learning and global communication it also brings headaches for the adults charged with the duty of keeping young people safe. Some of the dangers are familiar to us: abusive adults “grooming” vulnerable young people through chat rooms; exposure to age-inappropriate, offensive material; access to illegal, incorrect or deceptive information; the divulging of personal information online; downright confidence tricks....the list is frightening!

So what can we do?

There is only one really sensible option and that is to educate children about the safe and appropriate use of these technologies in much the same way as we teach them about the other risks they face from the world at large. We have a very clear acceptable use policy in school which outlines the responsibilities pupils have when using the internet.

We monitor internet use in school and pick up on offensive and inappropriate communications quickly. We almost never have to deal with instances of inappropriate or unsafe behaviour in school therefore.

Unfortunately we deal with a number of instances of unsafe and unacceptable mobile and internet use from home. I'll list just a few of the worrying practices we've dealt with over the last few weeks:

- cyber bullying – pupils writing offensive and threatening comments to or about one another on sites such as Facebook, Snapchat, Ask FM., Tumblr, Kik, Instagram, etc. (The age limit for Facebook is 13 incidentally- and not without very good reason we believe!)
- sexting - children sending explicit photographs of themselves to peers, or asking for these to be sent
- using offensive and abusive language in on line conversations
- pupils putting photographs of themselves in provocative/ explicit poses onto sites complete with names, contact details etc.
- pupils chatting online oblivious to the fact that a complete stranger has joined the “conversation”
- young people giving themselves usernames with overt sexual connotations (not the sort of thing you want to send on your application to university!)



- pupils giving out their home addresses , mobile phone numbers etc.
- pupils putting photographs of themselves in school uniform on social networking sites....it makes them very easy to track down
- pupils arranging to meet adults they have met in online gaming forums

Do you know what your child is doing when they're online? Do you look at what they are writing or who they are "talking" to when they are social networking? Is your child's computer hidden away in a bedroom where you can't monitor their activities easily? Does your child have free access to hand-held devices?

The dangers are very real I'm afraid. So too is the temptation to behave in an unacceptable way.

Please help us to educate your child and follow the following advice:

1. Reinforce the importance of safety- NEVER give out personal details on the internet and NEVER arrange to meet someone you have met on line.
2. Encourage your child to tell you straight away if they come across anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or that they find offensive.
3. Monitor your child's use carefully. Insist that they befriend you on Facebook for example
4. Have the computer somewhere the family can observe your child's activities: NOT in their bedroom. Remember, games consoles, tablets and phones also afford internet access. It's good practice to remove all these from bedrooms at bed time.

Understand how to use privacy settings and reporting protocols for sites like Facebook. We have a guide for parents in the Important Information section of the Starting at QES page on our website. (It's just below this document)

If you want to find out more about teaching safe habits at home go to www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents . This site is provided by CEOP (the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) whose website is also very informative.

...and please let us know if you are concerned about your child.

Mrs A L Wilkinson
Head of School