

Dear Parents and Carers

### **Computing and Online Safety**

In a modern world, children are constantly exposed to technology. Many also have skills which are far beyond their age. The online world is also ever-changing and the risks involved change constantly.

Online safety is not about banning technology, but to teach our children to use the technology safely and responsibly.

### **What Children Are Really Doing Online**

The content below may be upsetting to read but it is based on children's responses during the sessions so we feel it is important to share.

As part of our computing curriculum, all children from Year 1 to Year 6 took part in a webinar led by *The 2 Johns*. During these sessions, it became clear that many children are being exposed to online content that most adults may not be familiar with.

The children's responses showed that some are regularly watching content aimed at older audiences. Some children, including those as young as Year 1, were able to name influencers and YouTubers that staff did not recognise. The children also explained that some of these creators were ones they knew their parents would not approve of, as they may use inappropriate language or take part in risky challenges or online trends.

It was evident that while many children know how to use social media platforms, they do not always understand how to stay safe online. Some children believed that filming videos, sharing photos, or live streaming is harmless, without realising who might be watching or the potential risks involved.

We encourage parents and carers to watch online content with their child and ask questions such as, "Who do you watch and why?" This can help develop a better understanding of children's online activity, enabling parents to set clear boundaries and explain the reasons behind them.

### **Age- Appropriate Content**

We know from conversations with the children that the following platforms are the most popular:

- YouTube and YouTube Shorts
- TikTok
- Roblox, Fortnite, Minecraft



- Group chats (WhatsApp, Snapchat)

There are many issues with the children watching content on these platforms such as swearing or the use of adult humour; children being exposed to pranks or dangerous challenges, without understanding the risks involved; and exposure to sexualised language or imagery.

Most social media platforms have age restrictions. This is typically 13 years old, although for Whatsapp is 16 years old. Many gaming platforms allow use from much younger children with limitations in place (such as who they can connect or chat with).

We are aware that many of our children are accessing these platforms at much younger ages. It is important to highlight that where children are creating accounts on social media sites with incorrect ages, the platform will then target ads and content at the age they have given, meaning they will be exposed to inappropriate content.

Some of our youngest children are also particularly susceptible as they may use a parent's phone or tablet to play games, and then click through to different apps.

### **Personal Safety Online**

Children are taught in school about their digital footprint. This is the trail of data that is left behind while using the internet. There are several key messages that are taught:

- Never to share personal information.
- Once something is shared online, it cannot be taken back.
- People online are not always who they say they are.

Many popular games allow voice or text chat, meaning children can talk to their friends, but also may be talking to people they don't know.

We would encourage parents to have open conversations:

- Are children speaking to who they think they are speaking to?
- What are they talking about?
- Do they know who to speak to if they see something that worries or upsets them?

Messages, photos and videos can be shared or screenshot without a child's knowledge.

### **How Online Safety Is Taught in School**

In school, we teach explicit online safety lessons within the Computing curriculum and through our PSHE lessons. The content, breadth and progression of the themes covered is underpinned by Education for a Connected World, a DfE document produced by the Internet Watch Foundation to ensure age-appropriate online safety content is taught. In addition to the explicit lessons, online safety is embedded throughout the curriculum e.g. when children are learning about reliable sources of information or communicating online.

Further to this, we enrich the curriculum through participating in Safer Internet Day each year, providing sessions with the two Johns and providing peer workshops lead by external visitors.

### **What Parents Can Do at Home**

- The best action is to talk regularly to children about their social media and technology use - don't wait for a problem to arise.
- Set clear screen time boundaries and set device-free zones, such as bedrooms and mealtimes.



- Consider parental controls in place and use of privacy settings.

There is also a page on our website that has further advice and information for parents relating to online safety including age ratings, guides to online gaming and social media.

We hope you found this information to be helpful,

Yours sincerely,

Ann Robinson  
Headteacher

