Helping Your Child Stay Safe Online

Introduction

THE INTERNET IS A FABULOUS RESOURCE BUT IT ISN'T WITHOUT RISKS

As parents, we all want to keep our children safe. We teach them how to cross the road safely, we tell them not to talk to strangers but we sometimes forget to tell them how to keep safe while online.

The purpose of this guide is to help you protect your child online by making sure you know the risks and, more importantly, you know how your children may be accessing services on the internet without you knowing about it.

Technology Natives

IT'S A CHANGING WORLD… WE NEED TO KEEP UP!

Our children are technology natives – they have grown up with the internet. Everything we as adults can do on the web, children can generally do as well (but about 3 times as quickly. This is no bad thing. Technology will be essential to our children in their future careers. But we need to make sure we know what they're doing online and when they're doing it.

In the next few pages, we will share some of the tricks children may use to access the internet without your permission and give you some advice on how to help your children keep safe while surfing.

The internet is too big a resource to possibly cover every type of risk in one document so we've picked out some of the more important areas so that you can begin to support your child as they develop their ICT skills whilst maintaining a watchful eye over their online activities.

FACEBOOK

Facebook is a site for 13 year olds. If your child is using Facebook, they are exposed to inappropriate language and images. You may have genuine reasons for allowing them to use Facebook (like relatives in Australia etc.) but how often do you check what pages they've visited, who they're friends with and what messages they've sent? If you really feel you should let you child use Facebook, we recommend that you only allow access with supervision and you always ensure you know their password.

MSN

Instant messaging programs such as MSN are a great way to stay in touch. But were you aware that there is an option to keep a record of all conversations? This could help you know exactly what your child has been saying and to whom. To turn this feature on in MSN, go to TOOLS > OPTIONS > MESSAGES and select the box to keep a record of conversations.

EMAIL

We'd suggest that you create a shared family email address so that you can erase any inappropriate spam before your child accesses it. Primary school children do not need to have their own email address and they're very difficult to keep track of.

CYBER-BULLYING

Cyber-bullying is nothing new. It began with the dawn of mobile phones that could send text messages. But it has now become far more prevalent. It is difficult to prove and causes great upset to the families involved.

By keeping a close eye on your child's activity online, you will be able to help ensure they don't fall victim to bullying.

If the worst happens and your child receives threatening messages online, we recommend you do the follow:

- Take a screenshot of the offending material by pressing the "Prt Sc" button (you may need to press Shift or Fn depending on your keyboard layout);

- Paste the image of the screen into Word or Publisher;

- Print the image and bring it in to school.

If you have Windows 7, you can use the "Snippet Tool" in the start menu.
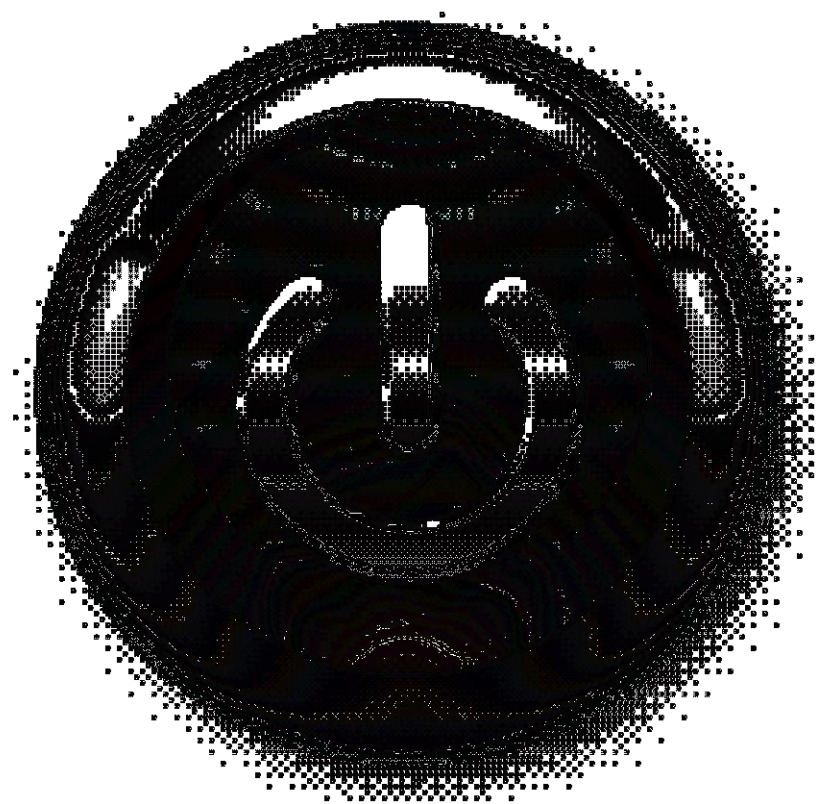
E-SAFETY

At school, we have begun to teach explicit e-safety lessons. All of the children have been told and shown how to act safely online. This message needs to be constantly reinforced at school and at home.

We have been using the materials found online at www.thinkuknow.co.uk – you can even download a safety button that your child can press when something they see upsets them. It will instantly blank the screen until you get a chance to look at the material.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Our door is always open. You are welcome to make an appointment to speak to your child's teacher about keeping safe online.

We're here to help. We can provide advice on what to look for, how to report abuse to Facebook or MSN and how to improve your child's privacy settings on Facebook.