

Autumn Term 1

WELCOME

In the lead up to Christmas many children may be asking for devices on their Christmas lists. To help prepare you and so that you can set the boundaries from the outset, the following information may be of use. This term we are focusing on **online safety**.

WHY ONLINE SAFETY MATTERS

Children have amazing opportunities online but also face risks, such as contact with strangers, bullying, and inappropriate content.

Key Findings:

- 19% of children aged 10-15 have messaged someone online they never met in real life (NSPCC).
- Online grooming crimes against children have increased by 82% in the last five years.
- Only 9% of girls report feeling safe online.

GAME SAFE GUIDE - HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE GAME SAFELY ONLINE

The "Game Safe" guide from Internet Matters helps parents support safe, balanced online gaming for young people. It covers age-appropriate content, managing screen time, setting parental controls, and staying alert to online risks like in-game chats and spending. It also encourages open conversations to promote safe and positive gaming experiences.



<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/game-safe-guide-to-help-young-people-game-safely-online/>

NSPCC

The NSPCC have some fantastic resources for parents with advice on how to help your child stay safe online and what to look out for.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Starting family conversations about online safety



Online safety quiz

Does your child know how to stay safe online? Here's a family quiz you can take together.

Take the quiz



Talking to your child about online safety

Advice on how to talk to your child about staying safe

Learn more



Age-appropriate support for children using technology

Read our helpful tips to help you decide what is right for your child when it comes to tech ownership and usage.

Learn more

TIPS FOR PARENTS/CARERS

Open Communication:

- Talk with your child regularly about what they do online: what apps/games they use, who they talk with, what they watch.
- Use open-ended questions: "What's your favourite game? Who did you chat to today?" rather than just "Have you been safe?"
- Let them know they can come to you if something makes them feel upset or worried — no blame, no punishment.
- Model good online behaviour: talk about your own screen-time, how you use apps, what you share.

Set Boundaries:

- Agree together on rules: when (which times), where (which rooms/devices) and how long children can go online.
- Ensure devices are in communal family spaces (not bedrooms) for younger children.
- Explain why rules exist — safety, privacy, wellbeing — so the child understands rather than just follows.

Explore Apps Together:

- Check which apps/games your child uses: what features (chat, voice, sharing) they include. Show them how to report/block/unfriend in the app/game if someone makes them feel uneasy.
- Keep software/devices updated to benefit from latest security features.
- Use built-in parental controls or third-party software where appropriate, but remember they're a support, not a substitute for conversations.

Teach Safe Sharing:

- Encourage children to treat their online social space like the playground: be kind, respectful, stop if someone is upset.
- Teach them: "If you wouldn't say/share it face-to-face, don't share it online."
- Make sure they understand what personal information is (full name, address, school, hobbies, photos) and why it must be protected.
- Explain that once something is shared online, it may be hard to remove completely.

Watch for Signs:

- Child is secretive about their online use or quickly switches off screens when you enter the room.
- They receive more messages/friends requests than you expected, especially from unknown people.
- They talk about meeting someone they only know online.
- They appear upset, anxious, withdrawn after going online or using a device
- They are asked to send images/videos, or share location or personal details.

If you are ever concerned that your child may have been groomed, threatened, or exploited online, you can make a report to CEOP via their Safety Centre.

MAIN ONLINE RISKS

- ◆ Contact with strangers/grooming
- ◆ Cyberbullying
- ◆ Exposure to harmful content
- ◆ Oversharing personal information
- ◆ Peer-to-peer sharing of risky content
- ◆ Gaming-related risks
- ◆ Emerging AI/deepfake threats



CHILDLINE - BEHIND THE SCREEN

Sexual extortion (blackmail) is a growing concern. Behind the Screen is a free campaign and information pack from Childline, offering guidance for staff, parents, and young people on its impact, language, and support strategies.

Some important areas covered in the guide include:

- How to Spot the Signs
- Common Language & Tactics
- Impact on Young People
- How to Support Young People
- Where to Get Help

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/sfzndfngn/childline-behind-the-screen-pdf-guide.pdf>

ROBLOX MAJOR SAFETY UPDATES

In November 2024 Roblox, the game used by 90 million people daily, announced some major updates which are available to users and parents in place for March 2025. These safety updates include:

- Limits to how children under 13 can communicate.
- Parental controls accessible from the parents phone rather from the child's device (remote management).

To see an explanation of all the new features visit the Roblox website.

You can also see the full guide to Roblox parental controls on the Internet Matters website:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/gaming-consoles/roblox-parental-controls/>

ROBLOX

Help to keep children safe online with Techosaurus

The NSPCC have created Techosaurus, a friendly dinosaur to assist you in having chats with your child about online safety. It is aimed at younger children and includes a book and activity pack (both chargeable). You can find out more here:



<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/advice-for-families/techosaurus/>

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is incredibly popular with young people and is used for group chats, voice messages and video calls. Users should be **at least 13** years old to use WhatsApp. We frequently receive reports of children using WhatsApp inappropriately, such as sharing images to embarrass others, sending hurtful messages, spreading rumours or excluding people from group chats to make them feel left out. Since WhatsApp lacks parental controls, it is important to think about whether it is really the right platform for your child.

For example, you should consider if your child has the critical thinking skills to recognise bullying. Furthermore, do they understand how to manage peer pressure and refrain from joining in on hurtful behaviour?

What should I be aware of if my child is using WhatsApp?

- **Group chats:** everyone within a group, even if they are not one of your child's contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group chat.
- **Inappropriate content:** users can be exposed to content that is not suitable for their age.
- **Location sharing:** talk to your child about the potential danger of sharing their location.
- **Chat lock/secret code:** users can lock chats as well as apply a secret code setting so a chat does not appear in the main chat.
- **Screentime:** due to addictive nature.
- **AI:** WhatsApp includes Meta AI.



WhatsApp Channels

Users should be at least 13 years old to use WhatsApp. If your child is using WhatsApp, then you should be aware of WhatsApp Channels. Channels are a one-way broadcast tool used by companies and individuals to send updates to followers.

WhatsApp Channels can be found on the Updates tab. From here you can view a whole host of channels, including channels that will not be age appropriate and may include adult content. You cannot switch off access to channels and there is no age rating associated with the channels so you would have to access them to know what the content truly is. Klicksafe highlight what you should be aware of:

<https://www.klicksafe.eu/en/news/was-sind-whatsapp-kanaele-und-was-muessen-eltern-beachten>

USEFUL RESOURCES

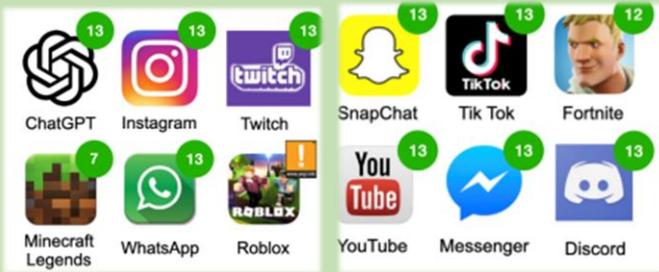
🌐 NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

🌐 CEOP Safety Centre: <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>

🌐 Internet Matters: <https://www.internetmatters.org/>

Popular apps and their age ratings

Here are the age ratings of some of the more popular apps that young people are currently accessing.



In addition to checking the age rating, the likes of PEGI (Pan European Game Information) provide further content descriptors, which will give you an indication of the type of content that your child might encounter e.g. violence or bad language within a game.

What else should I review?

It is important to note that whilst age ratings do allow you to see if something may be appropriate for your child, it is also vital to review the content yourself. This will allow you to make an informed decision as to whether it is suitable for your child to access and if it is necessary to apply further parental controls. For example, does it include the ability to communicate with others and are in game/app purchases available?

Nintendo Switch 2



The Nintendo Switch 2 was released last month and has a new communication feature that you should be aware of.

GameChat – NEW

GameChat is included within a Nintendo Switch Online membership and allows up to 12 people to chat while playing games. Players can share their screen, even if they are playing different games, chat with the built-in microphone and as the Nintendo Switch 2 allows cameras to be connected (sold separately), even video chat. If your child is using this feature, then ensure they know how to report other users.

You can find out more here:

https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Support/Nintendo-Switch-2/Guide-for-Parents-Guardians-Managing-your-Child-s-GameChat-Experience-with-Parental-Controls-2843765.html?srsItd=AfmBOoqxOQo_TVfSH6ibF3ZTley8Q3hUg_IIdaJjeqjMwsFV44Bkqvmo_E

Parental Controls

There is a free Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app that can be linked with your Nintendo Switch to monitor what your child is playing. The app creates a report so you can see which video games your child is playing and for how long. It also allows you to set which games your child can play, based on the PEGI age rating and restricts your child from sending or receiving messages from other users. GameChat settings can also be adjusted. Children under the age of 15 can only use GameChat if allowed by you through the app. They can then only use GameChat with people that you approve.

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.nintendo.znma&hl=en_GB

GAMING TIPS FOR PARENTS OF NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN

Internet Matters has published a helpful guide – focussing on online gaming safety tips for parents and carers of neurodivergent children.

The simple 5-page guide covers research, examples of suitable games, some of the challenges parents face, and the key benefits.

The guide can be accessed:

<https://www.flipsnack.com/internetmattersorg/guidance-for-parents-of-neurodivergent-gamers-internet-matters/full-view.html>

Artificial Intelligence

What is AI?

AI is when a computer/machine can learn and perform tasks like a human. Its popularity continues to grow, and examples include:

- **Search engines** such as Google now include an AI generated overview as part of their results.
- **Virtual assistants** like Alexa, Meta AI and Siri.
- **Chatbots** such as ChatGPT and My AI from Snapchat.

Opportunities

AI can be an effective tool when used correctly, for instance:

- **Homework** – children can use AI to support and assist their learning.
- **Advice** – AI can be used to provide information and suggestions on a variety of topics.

Risks and concerns

- **Misinformation** – ensure your child understands that AI can sometimes provide incorrect or misleading information.
- **Privacy issues** – read any privacy policies before using.
- **Chat apps** - a simple search of “AI Chat” within the App store highlights the number of apps already available that are not suitable for children as many are rated as 17+.
- **Image manipulation** – there are AI tools that can be used to digitally remove clothes from photos, which clearly raises serious safeguarding and privacy concerns.
- **Deepfakes** – there are also AI tools that create realistic, fake videos that can be used to spread misinformation or cause harm.

How can I protect my child?

To help keep your child safe online, it is important to:

- Check age ratings of any apps or websites that your child accesses.
- Develop your child’s digital literacy by highlighting the risks of AI and showing them how important it is to verify what they see online.
- Set up appropriate parental controls on their devices/broadband.
- Chat to your child regularly and ensure your child knows that they should talk to you or another trusted adult if anything concerns them.

Further information

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/parent-guide-to-artificial-intelligence-ai-tools/>

Minecraft

Minecraft is rated as PEGI 7, meaning it is suitable for those over 7 years of age.

Minecraft is a game where players can create worlds using blocks. There are two different modes – creative and survival. In

creative mode, users can build what they wish and have unlimited resources whereas in survival mode, players must gather resources, find food and defend themselves against mobs. Survival mode may include mild violence and scary characters.

You should be aware that there is a multiplayer option available where players can chat to each other. In-app purchases are also available to buy items such as skins, so ensure purchases are disabled or that a password or PIN is required to make them.

Ensure appropriate parental controls are applied, on both Minecraft and the console itself.

Find out more here:

<https://www.minecraft.net/en-us/article/parental-controls>

Further information

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/minecraft>

Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place online and can take many forms, such as sending malicious messages. Cyberbullying can happen at any time of the day, so often feels unrelenting. It can take place across many different platforms, such as on messaging apps like WhatsApp and Snapchat, on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok and via online games. Here are some examples of what cyberbullying can look like online:

- Sending nasty or hurtful messages
- Leaving unkind comments
- Sharing photographs of somebody else without their permission
- Excluding somebody on purpose
- Impersonating somebody with a fake account
- Telling/sharing lies
- Blackmailing

What should I do if my child is being bullied online?

If your child is being bullied, then try to stay calm and let them know that it is not their fault. It is always useful to keep evidence of any online bullying and inform their school so that they are aware. Show your child how to block and/or report any users/content and review their privacy settings to limit what others can see. You may also wish to review/set up any available parental controls.



There is a vast amount of information available online about cyberbullying. The following links provide further information on types of online bullying, and who you can contact if you need any further advice or support.

<https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/online-bullying/>

Keeping up with technology

It can be difficult to keep up with what our children are doing online as it can change so quickly. UK Safer Internet Centre have published an article with suggestions on what we can do:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/safer-internet-day-2024/parents-and-carers/things-change-so-fast-online-its-hard-to-keep-up-with-what-my-child-is-doing-2>

Did you know some Emojis have a double meaning?

For those that have watched Adolescence, you will know children and young people may be using emojis to mean something completely different. For example, the kidney bean emoji may be used to identify as an incel. It is important that you are aware of how emojis can be used and keep up to date with the way in which they can be used as their meanings are changeable. You can find out further information here:

https://www.bark.us/blog/emoji-slang-guide/?srsltid=AfmBOor3knTOql6cRqC_luFD9eRkFnFXReYJq3nTh-5xWWdS-JKDgJZ-

*We strongly believe that online safety is a **shared responsibility** — between children, parents/carers, the school, and the wider community. Children are growing up in an ever-changing digital world and our role is to equip them with the understanding, tools and confidence to stay safe and to enjoy the many positive aspects of the internet.*

Please do contact our safeguarding team or your child's class teacher if you have any concerns or would like further advice or support.

SAFEGUARDING TEAM:

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs Kirsty Robson

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mr Steven Bailey

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mrs Kristina Parfrey