

Internet and Mobile Phone Safety

Periodically we like to remind parents about the potential vulnerability of students using social networking sites and mobile technology. The recent highly publicised case in Birmingham where at least twenty teenage girls were groomed into exposing themselves and performing sexual acts on web cams should be a reminder of what can potentially result. We are aware that "Sexting" where young people take indecent photographs of themselves and post these on social networks or send them by text is an ever increasing trend amongst young people.

What Can We Do As Parents?

- Visit the Thinkuknow website www.thinkuknow.co.uk
Thinkuknow is an education initiative by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre - the UK's national law enforcement agency that focuses on tackling the sexual abuse of children. This site has the latest advice about all aspects of internet safety and using mobile technology.
- You can register on this site to receive monthly emails giving you advice and tips on internet safety.
- Advise your children not to post any pictures, videos or information on their profiles, or in chat rooms, that they would not want a parent or carer to see.
- Get to know your child's online habits. Children are inquisitive. They will look to explore the internet as much as they do the real world. Knowing the sites they go to, the people they meet there and what they do will help to keep children safe.
- Stay alert to any sudden changes in mood or appearance, or to any major change in habits or to increased secretiveness. These are often tell-tale signs that something is not right.
- Keep lines of communication open - tell your child they can always talk to you or another trusted adult, such as a teacher, if they do end up in some sort of trouble on the internet. Make children aware that there are things on the internet which may distress them.
- Spend some time surfing the internet yourself. The more that you know about the internet, the better able you are, in turn, to help your child navigate around it without coming to any harm.
- Install internet filtering software showing a Child Safety Online Kitemark on your computer. Filtering products with a Kitemark have been independently tested to provide a simple and effective means of support to parents, helping to ensure that a child's online experience is a safe one. The Kitemark scheme is sponsored by the [Home Office](#) and [Ofcom](#).
- Discuss with your son/daughter how they are using their phone and social networking sites. Are they aware of the dangers? Do they know who they are talking to?
- Are you monitoring what is going on? Is your son/daughter's computer out of sight, perhaps it should not be out of a parent's mind.
- Talk with them about cyber bullying. There is a simple rule:
Don't write it! Don't send it! Don't forward it!
Nothing is ever deleted; the police can always find it!
- Recommend your son/daughter visits the CEOP site. On the home page access 'Think before you send'. There is some very sound advice here aimed at young people.

This information is not meant to be in any way alarmist but aims to provide a reminder of the importance of ensuring internet safety just as we would ensure our children cross the road safely.

M K Willer
Assistant Head