Your Role in Online Safety

Parents and carers can play an important role in helping children to stay safe online. Children will often speak to someone at home first when they encounter a problem but it can be difficult to stay on top of the devices, apps, games and websites that children use.

This guide aims to make parents and carers aware of some of the risks children might encounter online and offer some tips and advice to help keep them safe.

Quick Strategies

- **Have conversations with your child about their online interests.**

- **Create a family agreement to establish boundaries and expectations when on the internet.**

- **Give your child strategies to deal with any online content that they are not comfortable with, for example turning off the screen and telling you.**

- **Use the privacy and safety settings on your child's devices and in the apps and websites they use.**

- **Turn on safe search in search engines and consider using parental controls on your home internet connection.**

- **Try to stay engaged with your child while they are using the internet. For example, keep internet connected devices in a family room.**

- **Get your child to manage their friends lists, use a nickname and use a family email address for signing up to services.**

- **Make sure your child knows who they can talk to and how to report an incident if something upsets them online.**

References and Links

The information in this leaflet has been compiled from guidance taken from the following websites.
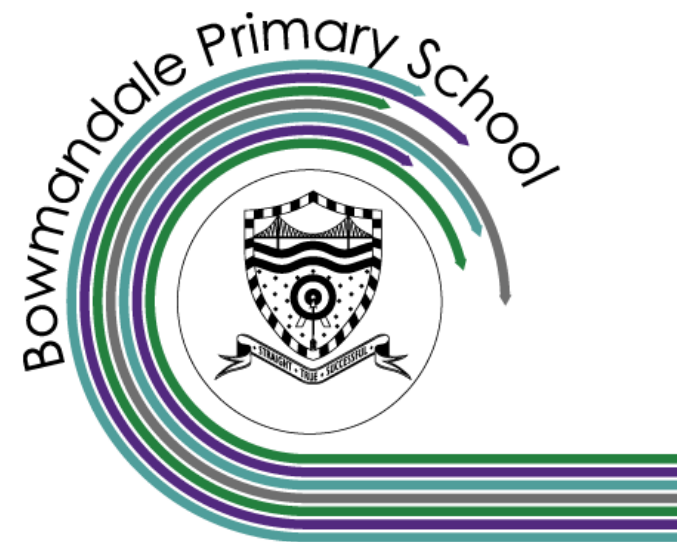
www.saferinternet.org.uk

www.childnet.com

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.bullying.co.uk/cyberbullying

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

www.northlincslscb.co.uk

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Inappropriate Content

Inappropriate content can include pornography, violence and extreme viewpoints. It can be accessed accidentally when searching or via links from other websites.

Safe search and content filtering helps protect against inappropriate content but cannot be 100% effective. Supervising your children while they are online is ideal but you probably can't be there all the time. Therefore, possibly the best way to keep children safe online is to provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to make the right decisions to keep themselves safe.

Children can use simple strategies like turning off the screen and telling an adult when something upsets them.

Game Ratings

Age ratings (PEGI ratings) on games give you information about their age appropriateness and content (violence, language, drugs etc). Familiarise yourself with the age ratings for games and apps and use online reviews from other parents to help you make choices about suitability. Set up a family email account for your children to use when signing up to new games and websites and encourage them to use nicknames instead of their full name online.

Grooming and Inappropriate Contact

There are many opportunities for children to meet other people online via social networks and online games but it is difficult to know who it is they are really communicating with. Sadly, some people deliberately hide behind assumed identities to make contact with children with the intention of initiating sexual activity, either in the real world or online. This is referred to as 'grooming'.

Children should be taught to keep personal information secret and to be aware that people online are not always who they say they are. Children should never agree to meet with someone they met online.

If you have concerns that your child is, or has been, the subject of inappropriate sexual contact, you can report it to the police via the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP).

Commercialism and Debt

Marketing aimed at children can lead to debt being accidentally run up via their parents' credit or debit card. Online games and mobile apps on services such as the Apple App Store and Google Play appear free but may offer in-app purchases which can be very tempting. If your credit or debit card details are stored on a device, purchases via online shops, games and gambling websites can be just a click away. Use the device's settings to disable in-app purchases and make sure your password has to be entered each time a purchase is made by turning off features like '1-click' purchasing.

Sexting

Sexting is the exchange of self-generated sexually explicit images through messages or webcams via the Internet. Sexting is sometimes seen by children and young people as flirting and, therefore, a normal part of relationships.

It is important to talk to your child about online risks and what to do if they ever feel uncomfortable or pressured. It is worth remembering that it is against the law for anyone of any age to take, send or distribute explicit pictures or videos of anyone under the age of 18 even if they are of themselves.

Online Reputation

The trail someone leaves on the Internet is sometimes called a 'digital footprint'. It is important that children understand that everything they do and say online may be being monitored and can be accessed by the police. Remind them to think before they post. Once on the Internet, pictures and comments can be very difficult, if not practically impossible, to delete.

Some online behaviour may also break the law, for example downloading or sharing copyrighted music, films and games. Encourage children to use reliable websites and show them how to legally access the music, films and games they want.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is any form of bullying that takes place online. Cyber bullying can happen via social networks, messaging apps, gaming sites and chat rooms. It can go on at any time and hurtful material can be seen very quickly by lots of people.

Cyber bullying can be very serious and can constitute a criminal offence. Some types of cyber bullying are: harassment, sharing photos with the intention to ridicule, spreading unkind rumours and gossip, using extreme and offensive language, impersonation, faking a profile, outing, trickery, stalking, exclusion, threatening behaviour, blackmail and grooming.

If your child is a victim of cyber bullying, try to keep evidence of any messages and posts so they can be used as evidence. Use the security settings on websites and apps to manage who can see what to help keep personal information private. Manage friend lists and block people who are causing the problem. Report incidents of bullying to the website or service on which it takes place and ask for abusive comments to be removed. Serious incidents can be reported to the police.

Reinforce the importance of telling a trusted adult straight away if someone is bullying your child or making them feel uncomfortable online. School will help deal with cyber bullying incidents when the children involved are pupils at Bowmandale.