

Ridgeway Primary School
Online Safety

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you because of increasing concerns regarding the misuse of social networking sites and the internet amongst some of our pupils. There has also been a worrying increase in the incidents of children searching for inappropriate subjects on the internet, which is being brought into school, leading to unsuitable conversations in school. In addition to this, there have been more comments about conversations people are having on different social networking sites which again are not appropriate.

This letter will give you some suggestions for helping to keep your children safe on the internet, when using computers, tablets and phones, and when accessing social media over the Christmas period. Young children are increasingly digitally literate, and as adults, we need to know what they are up to and teach them how to keep safe online.

Social media:

Technically, children under the age of 13 shouldn't be building profiles on Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat etc. This is difficult, as many of their friends may already have profiles. Some sites such as YouTube, allow for children aged 13-17 to have profiles under their parent's consent. Twitter's terms of use are a little more confusing, and imply that children under 13 can have a profile with their parent's consent. When your children are old enough to access social media, take time to sit with them and go through privacy settings, explaining who can see what they publish.

Passwords:

Though you need to be teaching your children about password safety, and encouraging them not to share passwords with their friends, you also need to let them know that you can and will have access to their equipment and that you need to have access to their password, even if you don't memorise it. This will help them if they lock themselves out of their equipment by forgetting their password, and also means that you can go in and oversee their online behaviours. Teaching them how to create a strong password is a good idea — starting with mixing numbers and letters with very young children. Take time to explain your reasons for needing to know their password, and why they shouldn't share it with anyone else.

Messaging and group chat:

This can be a tricky area to police, as by its very nature, it is hidden from public view. Make sure that you check in with your child regularly about their group chats, who is taking part in them, and make sure that they are only talking to people that they know in real life. Ask them to show you some of the conversations so that you can get a feel for what's going on in the chats. Keeping an open dialogue will help to maintain the trust between you and your children, and will ensure that your child will feel that they can come and talk to you if something is worrying them online.

Gaming:

Lots of children enjoy gaming on their video consoles and on the internet. Open and closed groups can easily be set up by children, and you need to know what is going on in their online play, in the same way as you do in their face-to-face relationships. Sit with them whilst they are engaged in their games, and ask them about what is happening. Who are they talking to? What are they playing together? Build up an interest in their game playing, and again, you will open that dialogue to engage with your child if they feel things are worrying them.

The most important thing you can do, is talk to your child. Engage in their interests and find out what they are up to while monitoring their activity. For more information please visit:

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/> (A great resource with the latest apps and websites along with lots of information about the risks posed and the ways to minimise those risks).

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/> (The NSPCC's website dedicated to e-safety with videos, games and information aimed at both children and adults).