The importance of online safety

WHY IS ONLINE SAFETY SO IMPORTANT?

Technology is now ubiquitous in our daily lives. It has been, and will continue in future to be, of huge benefit to our day-to-day activities. It is therefore incredibly important that we prepare children for this technology-driven world so that they can deal with online content independently and safely.

In September 2016, it became a statutory requirement that all children in primary and secondary education should be taught safeguarding principles (*Keeping children safe in education* September 2016). The teaching of online safety is also a statutory requirement of the National curriculum in England: computing programmes of study.

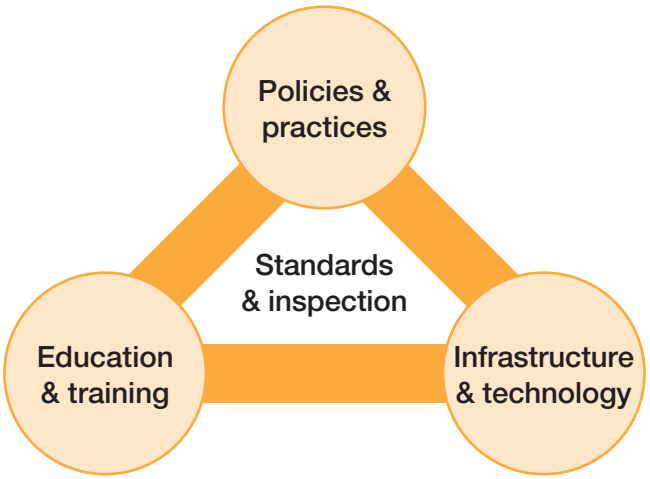
WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

There are four key online safety risks, often cited as the **four Cs**:

- **Content** (accessing inappropriate content)
- **Contact** (inappropriate contact)
- **Conduct** (inappropriate behaviour)
- **Commercialisation** (online manipulation by commercial organisations).

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF AN ONLINE SAFETY PROGRAMME

The fundamental elements of an online safety programme are summarised by the PIES model, which shows how education, policy and infrastructure are linked to provide a secure environment.



PIES model for limiting online safety risks (from original Becta online safety advice)

Switched on Online Safety forms the education element of this model but links back to (and helps schools to embed) online safety policy, Acceptable Use Agreements and robust reporting (see My Rising Stars).

This scheme has been written with reference to the key principles of the PIES model and recommendations of the BYRON Review (in particular, building resilience and ultimately working towards the recommendations of keeping children safe in education).

Building resilience

A fundamental element of online safety is supporting children to develop **resilience**. Rather than preventing children from using technology because it is deemed unsafe, it is far better to teach children to manage these risks safely. This can be likened to children around a swimming pool; it is far better to teach children to swim so they are safe around water, rather than cordon off the swimming pool.

Children need to be able to navigate and make decisions so they are able to self-regulate independently when they leave primary school.

Do you have an online safety concern now? Contact the UK Safer Internet Centre at helpline@saferinternet.org.uk, 0844 381 4772.

ENGAGING PARENTS AND CARERS

Parental engagement is fundamental to the success of safeguarding children online and it underpins all units in this resource (see pages 9–10 for advice on engaging parents and carers). Encouraging parents or carers to talk openly about online safety issues helps children to develop safe online habits regardless of whether they are at home or at school.

ROBUST REPORTING

The use of appropriate reporting routes has been embedded through this scheme and phase-specific reporting routes are provided in every unit:

KS1	LKS2	UKS2
Talking to a trusted adult	Talking to a trusted adult	Talking to a trusted adult
	Calling Childline (0800 1111)	Calling Childline (0800 1111)
		Contacting Childline www.childline.org.uk/get-support/
		Clicking the CEOP button
		Using reporting buttons within websites, games and apps (Y6 only)

POSITIVE TECHNOLOGY ACTIVITY

When talking to parents and children (particularly with reference to ideas for holidays and half term), it is important to encourage the use of positive, age-appropriate and purposeful technology. For example, you might encourage parents to explore geocaching (treasure-hunting using GPS), make short family movies, or even to code together (using platforms such as Scratch and ScratchJr).

Any online safety session for parents should always include ideas for safe and fun/appropriate apps/sites and activities involving technology, along with a reminder that the job market is in increasing need of digital skills.

COMMON-SENSE PRINCIPLES

Much of online safety is about using and applying common sense. Common-sense principles should help children and their parents and carers apply positive offline behaviours such as respect, responsibility, and an understanding of risk to online scenarios. It is important to recognise that removing access to technology both on and offline can actually lead to an increased risk.

Teachers should feel confident about reinforcing positive messages around technology in a similar way to everyday conversations around eating 5 a day and crossing the road safely. These positive messages might include:

- limiting screen time each day
- advice on mobile phone usage
- protecting security on phones and tablets used by children
- reading real books at bedtime
- using age-appropriate technology (including **PEGI ratings** for games).

Conversations around the latest technology often peak around Christmas time, so this might be a good time for a class survey to find out what technology children are using.

INFRASTRUCTURE

A wealth of advice on ensuring a protected and safe digital space for your school can be found online:

- Cloud computing – Government advice on how schools can move services to the cloud: www.gov.uk/government/publications/cloud-computing-how-schools-can-move-services-to-the-cloud
- Cloud software services – Government advice on how schools should protect their data: www.gov.uk/government/publications/cloud-software-services-and-the-data-protection-act
- Report on data protection advice from the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office): https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/
- Guidance on taking photos in school from the ICO: https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/schools/photos/ (Schools should model the behaviours it expects of its pupils.)

YEARLY ONLINE SAFETY EVENTS

A number of related online safety events happen throughout the year. You may wish to consider tying in content of the units with these events:

- **Autumn term:** Anti-bullying week (mid–late November)
- **Spring term:** Safer Internet Day (early–mid-February)
- **Summer term: ChildNet** Film Competition (Closing date: mid-June)