

Online Safety



Dear Parents/Carers,

Today is Safer Internet Day. Safer Internet Day encourages children and young people to use the internet and digital technology in a safe and positive way. In 2017 it reached more people than ever before, with 3 million children and 2 million parents hearing about the day! The theme for the day this year is: **“Create, Connect and Share Respect: A better internet starts with you”**. This year’s theme encourages everyone to join the global movement, to participate, to make the most of the internet’s potential to bring people together.

How can people help?

- **Children and young people** can help to create a better internet by being kind and respectful to others online, by protecting their online reputations (and those of others), and by seeking out positive opportunities to create, engage and share online.
- **Parents and carers** play a crucial role in empowering and supporting children to use technology responsibly, respectfully, critically and creatively, whether it is by ensuring an open dialogue with their children, educating them to use technology safely and positively, or by acting as digital role models.
- **Teachers, educators and social workers** can help to create a better internet by equipping their pupils and students with digital literacy skills and by developing their critical thinking skills, which will allow them to better navigate the online world. They can empower them to create their own content, make positive choices online and can set a personal example of online behaviour for their pupils and students.
- **Industry** can help to create a better internet by creating and promoting positive content and safe services online, and by empowering users to respond to any issues by providing clear safety advice, a range of easy-to-use safety tools, and quick access to support if things do go wrong.
- **Decision makers and politicians** need to provide the culture in which all of the above can function and thrive – for example, by ensuring that there are opportunities in the curriculum for children to learn about online safety, ensuring that parents and carers have access to appropriate information and sources of support, and that industry are encouraged to self-regulate their content and services. They

must also take the lead in governance and legislation, and ultimately ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people through effective child protection strategies for the online world.

- **Everyone has a responsibility to make a positive difference online.** We can all promote the positive by being kind and respectful to others and seeking out positive opportunities to create and connect. We can all respond to the negative by reporting any inappropriate or illegal content.

Fake News – Who can you trust? Information taken from <http://parentinfo.org/article/fake-news-who-can-you-trust>

Part of the Safer Internet theme this year is about developing children’s skills to think critically when using the internet. Fake news is rarely harmless: plausible lies pass for truth, reputations can be shredded and it’s even more serious when it’s a deliberate attempt to manipulate public opinion. This year we’ve seen examples of this both in the USA and in our own general election.

Here are some questions to guide discussions with children about the subject:

- Does the story sound believable?
- Do other sites have the same facts and figures?
- Has it been reported on the radio, TV and in more than one reputable newspaper?
- Does the photo or video look normal?
- Does the website look professional or does it use poor quality graphics?
- Is some of the text written in caps– usually a sign of sensationalism - or feature lots of exclamation marks?
- Does the website have an About Us or a Contact section?
- Does it have a standard address such as .org.uk; .com?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'no', encourage your child to check the story again before spreading the word. We all need to be more discerning and critical – we can’t afford to take the news at face value any more.

Fake News and critical literacy evidence review. - <https://literacytrust.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/all-party-parliamentary-group-literacy/fakenews/>

Further Information and Resources

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/> - This website includes advice on setting up parental controls and useful conversation starters

<http://www.childnet.com/resources> – A range of resources to help tackle current issues in Online Safety with children.

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/young-people/resources-3-11s> - Here you will find films, storybooks and other fun sites, with plenty of information to help you enjoy your time online and stay safe on the internet.

