



The Federation of The Downs & Northbourne Church of England Primary Schools



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Dear Parents/ Carers,

Online safety is an important part of keeping children safe at The Downs CEP School.

All of our pupils are taught how to stay safe and behave appropriately online, but this approach is only successful if we work together and reinforce safe behaviour at home too.

As the summer holidays approach, many children may be looking forward to spending their free time socialising or gaming with their friends online, so we feel that this is an appropriate time to highlight some simple online safety tips to help parents/ carers engage with and support their children online.

Talk to your children:

In order to protect children online, it is vital that we take an active interest in their online lives and engage in the digital world with them.

- Let your children teach you about their online world and how they use technology; playing new games and exploring websites together can often open opportunities to discuss safe behaviour online.
- Make sure your children know that you are safe and approachable; remind them that they can tell you if something happens online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable, without being told off or punished.

Take a look at the conversation starter ideas and family agreement template available from Childnet International: www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/have-a-conversation

Be 'Share Aware':

If your children love to socialise online, it can be difficult to monitor who they are talking to and what they post all of the time. However there are some simple steps you can take to help minimise the risks.

- Talk to your child about what is and isn't appropriate to share online; whether it is their date of birth, location or photographs, they should be really careful about posting their personal information.
- Make sure your child understands how their privacy settings work; show your child how to make their online accounts private and discuss how to block and report other people online. Think U Know and the UK Safer Internet Centre have helpful guides:
 - www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents
 - www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers



- Ensure that you role-model positive behaviour online; consider asking your child's permission before posting photos of them online and empower them to have control over their 'digital reputation'.

Have a look at the advice produced by the NSPCC and watch the 'Share Aware' videos with your children: www.nspcc.org.uk/ShareAware

Managing screen-time:

Some parents feel guilty about the amount of time their children spend looking at a screen, but you can help your child maintain a healthy balance between online and offline activities.

- Set boundaries for children online the same way you do in the 'real world'. Don't try to ban the internet; instead agree as a family how long tech should be used for and what the limits, expectations and consequences are.
- Share quality time together. Consider nominating 'tech-free' areas or times, such as your child's bedroom or dinner time, where you can give each other undivided attention and share offline experiences, like reading a book together.
- Familiarise yourself with the parental controls on your home devices or from your broadband provider; if 'rules' aren't enough for your children, you may find switching the 'Wi-Fi' off in the evenings or keeping charges downstairs may help ensure that they get a good night's rest.
- Be a good role-model; remember that your children will follow your example, so think about your own use of technology and how often you pick up your devices.

Internet Matters has a helpful interactive guide to parental controls: www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/interactive-guide as well as #Screensafe summer tips: www.internetmatters.org/keeping-kids-safe-in-the-sun-and-on-the-screen

Make it enriching:

As adults, it is important that we acknowledge the many wonderful and positive opportunities the internet provides for our children; we just need to steer them in the right direction.

- Encourage your child's creativity by teaching them how to take photos or make videos safely; these can be used to make a collage or be shared with family and friends.
- Take the screens outside and utilise mobile devices to go on a real-life treasure hunt; when used safely 'Geocaching' and augmented reality games such as 'Pokémon Go' can enable parents to play with their children online, as well as enjoying fresh air and exercise.
- Being online should be a sociable activity; keep your devices in a communal area and take it in turns to choose a game or video that the whole family can enjoy together. Why not take it in turns the good old fashioned way to beat the highest scorer?
- Create learning opportunities; just because they're not at school, doesn't mean children can't continue to learn new things. There are a number of educational apps and resources available online or simply encourage your children to safely research different things online.

Have a look at this article from Digital Parenting Magazine, which recommends educational apps to help you and your family enjoy the outdoors: www.vodafoneigitalparenting.co.uk/useful-tools/outdoor-apps

Kind regards

Miss T Leighton
Head of School

