



Settle and Malhamdale Partnership



Internet Safety Guidance for Parents

Without question, the most impactful online safety education and monitoring will come from the home environment. Children need to feel safe in discussing online safety issues with their parents and it is the role of the school to enable children to feel safe discussing internet safety issues with trusted people at home and in a school environment.

A recent survey has shown that 77% of children want their parents to be there for them if something worries them or happens to them on the internet. It is important that as parents and educators we react calmly to online safety incidents and our first instinct should be to make children feel safe and not scared in these situations.

We recommend that the most important step parents can make toward developing an ethos of online safety is to have regular conversations with their children about internet usage and how to be safe online.

There are a number of additional steps that can also make a big difference:

- Share profiles/devices so that you can see what your children are accessing
- Ensure the strongest privacy settings are in place for your child
- Set time boundaries for internet and computer usage
- Encourage your child to never share any personal information
- Explore with your child the potential dangers of sharing offensive/inappropriate content

It is the role of the school to provide children with an effective, reactive Online Safety Curriculum. As a school partnership we follow guidance from the UK Council for Child Internet Safety and the [Education for a Connected World framework \(2020\)](#) alongside resources provided by Common Sense Media and Internet Matters.

Online safety education will be provided to pupils in the following ways:

- An online safety programme of study is provided and regularly revisited – this includes vital, relevant and up to date messages about internet usage, video gaming and apps and may be reactive to locality and national issues;
- Key online safety messages will be reinforced as part of a programme of externally supplied assemblies and activities annually on World Safer Internet Day;
- Pupils will be taught in all lessons to be critically aware of the materials/content they access online and be guided to validate the accuracy of information;
- Pupils will be taught to acknowledge the source of information used and to respect copyright when using material accessed on the internet;

- Pupil questionnaires about internet usage will be carried out annually;
- Staff will act as good role models in their use of ICT, the internet and mobile devices;
- Key messages will also be linked in with work children do in their annual *Taking Care Project*.

Due to the national restrictions that took place during the Pandemic, there has been an increase in the amount of screen time children are having. Online games, social media and video chat programs provided opportunities for children to connect and play with their friends, parents and relatives and usage has continued to be high, nationally, post Pandemic.

While children aged 13 and older may already be familiar with social media, the pandemic has introduced younger children to social networking tools that may not be designed for them and for which they may have limited preparation. It is therefore really important that both parents and school are aware of how the internet is being used by our young children and work proactively to educate them and to keep them safe.

With this in mind, we would like to update you with some of the safeguarding concerns we have become aware of and signpost you to good, trusted websites where you can learn more.

We have noticed a notable rise in children using apps which are not age appropriate.

In particular:

- TikTok (age 16years)
- WhatsApp (age 16years)
- Instagram (age 13years)
- Fortnite (age 12 years)
- Facebook (age 13years)

We have become aware of children playing games which include scenes of horror and watching films with an 18 rating too. We have seen children bring arguments from their time playing on inappropriate and violent games into school and sharing offensive language with their peers. At times this has created safeguarding concerns with potential child on child abuse and potential bullying concerns. We are seeing lovely children fall unwittingly into unsuitable behaviour because they are spending too much time accessing inappropriate sites – often without parents being aware. We are concerned that children are accessing social media sites that put them at risk of being prey to undesirable persons.

Though we live in a beautiful part of the country we need to accept that safeguarding concerns can take place in our locality and develop the mentality of vigilance and understanding that , “It could happen here”.

We strongly encourage our parents to regularly check in and monitor their child’s online activity, so that children are not being exposed to unnecessary stress or find themselves in a position where they don’t feel safe or unwittingly pass on risky behaviours to others. Agreeing on a time limit for screen time can also help children to become more aware take more control of their time online.

[National Online Safety’s top tips for checking and monitoring age ratings:](#)

1) Do your research

If you've noticed a new game that your child has downloaded then use quality resources to make sure that your knowledge is up to date. Online websites, such as National Online Safety, can provide you with the information you need.

2) Review parental controls

Review your parental controls on the stores where you buy games from. Most sites allow parents to set passwords to block games with certain age restrictions from being downloaded.

3) Encourage open dialogue

Encourage open dialogue with your child. You don't want to be in position where they won't talk to you if something has made them feel uncomfortable in a game because they are worried they will get in trouble for playing the game in the first place.

4) Discuss ratings

Talk to your child about why the game has been awarded a certain label. Debate the positives and negatives of playing a game and decide on some ground rules together - please visit <https://pegi.info> for more information on suitable video games and their age ratings.

As a School Partnership we would also like to ass one more top tip ...

5)Keep your school up to date with current issues and concerns that you may have

If you are aware of online behaviour that potentially causes risk to your child or others then please keep the school informed. By raising issues, we can alert parents and children to dangers and proactively deal with concerns.

Internet use is now a part of the modern world. The job of parents and school is to teach the children how to use the internet safely and confidently. By giving thought to the possible dangers that are out there and by having a transparent and open conversation with our children about e-safety, we can keep children safe. Internet safety requires vigilance and the monitoring of children's use. By being proactive and keeping a track on what the children access in their spare time and keeping up to date with the latest trends and habits we can all work together to educate responsible, careful users of the internet.

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