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Online Safety Policy

Introduction

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) covers a wide range of resources including web-based and mobile learning. Currently the internet technologies children and young people are using, both inside and outside of the classroom, include:

- Websites
- Learning Platforms and Virtual Learning Environments
- Cloud-based voice virtual personal assistants e.g. Alexa, Echo dot
- Email and Instant Messaging
- Chat Rooms and Social Networking
- Blogs and Wikis
- Podcasting
- Video Broadcasting (live or edited)
- Music Downloading/Production
- Gaming
- Mobile/smart phones/smart watches with text, video and/or web functionality
- Other mobile devices with web functionality

Whilst these ICT resources can be exciting and beneficial both in and out of the context of education, all users need to be aware of the range of risks associated with the use of Internet technologies.

In Ballyholme Primary School we understand the responsibility to educate our pupils in online safety issues. We aim to teach them appropriate behaviours and critical thinking to enable them to remain both safe and legal when using the internet and related technologies, in and beyond the context of the classroom.

The Internet

The internet is an exciting and unique resource. It brings the world into the classroom by giving children access to the global network of educational resources. There is no doubt that the use of the Internet is an essential skill for children as they grow up in the modern world. The Internet is, however, an open communications' channel, available to all. Anyone can send messages, discuss ideas and publish materials with little restriction. This brings young people into contact with people from all sectors of society and with a wide variety of materials some of which could be unsuitable. Key concerns are:

Potential Contact

Children may come into contact with someone online who may wish to harm them. Some adults use social networks, chat rooms or e-mail to communicate with children for inappropriate reasons.

Children should be taught:

- That people are not always who they say they are
- That 'Stranger Danger' applies to people they encounter through the Internet
- That they should never give out personal details
- That they should never meet alone anyone contacted via the Internet
- That once they publish information it can be disseminated with ease and cannot be destroyed

Inappropriate Content

Through the Internet there are unsuitable materials in many varieties. Anyone can post material on the Internet.

Some material is published for an adult audience and is unsuitable for children e.g. materials with a sexual content.

Materials may express extreme views e.g. some use the web to publish information on weapons, crime and racism that would be restricted elsewhere.

Materials may contain misleading and inaccurate information e.g. some use the web to promote activities that are harmful such as anorexia or bulimia.

Children should be taught:

- That the information on the Internet is not always accurate or true
- To question the source of information
- How to respond to unsuitable materials or requests and that they should tell a teacher/adult immediately
- Not to fill in forms with a lot of personal details
- Not to use an adult's credit card to order online products

Excessive Commercialism

The Internet is a powerful vehicle for advertising. In visiting websites, and through online gaming, children have easy access to advertising that is very persuasive.

If children are to use the Internet in places other than in school e.g. libraries, clubs and at home, they need to be educated about how to behave online and to discuss problems. No solution can fully guarantee Internet safety therefore teachers, pupils and parents must remain vigilant.

Roles and Responsibilities

As Online safety is an important aspect of strategic leadership within the school, the Principal and Board of Governors have ultimate responsibility to ensure that the policy and practices are embedded and monitored.

It is the role of the ICT Co-ordinators to keep abreast of online safety issues and guidance through organisations such as CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection), Safer Schools NI App and Childnet. The ICT Co-ordinators have responsibility for leading and monitoring the implementation of online safety throughout the school.

The Principal/ICT Co-ordinators update Senior Management and Governors with regard to online safety and all governors have an understanding of the issues at our school in relation to local and national guidelines and advice.

Writing and reviewing the Online Safety Policy

This policy is to protect the interests and safety of the whole school community. It is linked to other school policies including those for ICT, Behaviour, Health and Safety, Child Protection, and Anti-bullying.

It has been agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and approved by the Governing Body. The Online Safety policy and its implementation will be reviewed every two years.

Online Safety Skills' Development for Staff

- All staff receive regular information and training on Online Safety issues through the Co-ordinators at staff meetings
- All staff have been made aware of individual responsibilities relating to the safeguarding of children within the context of Online Safety and know what to do in the event of misuse of technology by any member of the staff community
- All staff are encouraged to incorporate Online Safety activities and awareness within their lessons

Online Safety Information for Parents/Carers

- Parents/carers are asked to give permission for use of the Internet in school in line with our ICT policies
- Parents/carers are required to make a decision as to whether they consent to images of their child being taken/used on the school website and social media platforms
- The school website contains useful information and links to information like National Online Safety and help sheets for protecting pupils at home
- The school will communicate relevant Online Safety information through newsletters and the school website

Parents should remember that it is important to promote Online Safety in the home and to monitor Internet use.

Some ideas to think about:

- Keep the computer in a communal area of the home
- Be aware that children have access to the internet via gaming stations and portable technologies such as smart phones and smart watches
- Monitor online time and be aware of excessive hours spent on the Internet
- Take an interest in what children are doing. Discuss with the children what they are seeing and using on the Internet
- Advise children to take care and to use the Internet in a sensible and responsible manner. Know the SMART tips
- Discuss the fact that there are websites/social networking activities which are unsuitable for their age
- Relay the message that social media sites are age graded 13+ to safe-guard younger children
- Discuss how children should respond to unsuitable materials or requests
- Remind children never to give out personal information online
- Remind children that people online may not be who they say they are
- Be vigilant. Ensure that children do not arrange to meet someone they meet online

- Be aware that children may use the Internet in places other than their own home or at school and that this Internet use may not be filtered or supervised
- Please use the 7 question conversation poster to chat about online safety with your child, found on our school website under e-safety
- Ensure home hubs are set up with age appropriate parental controls (help sheets available on the school website under e-safety)

Teaching and Learning

Internet use

- The school will plan and provide opportunities within a range of curriculum areas to teach Online Safety
- Educating pupils on the dangers of technologies that may be encountered outside school is done informally when opportunities arise and as part of the Online Safety curriculum
- Pupils are aware of the impact of online bullying and know how to seek help if these issues affect them. Pupils are also aware of where to seek advice or help if they experience problems when using the Internet and related technologies: i.e. parent/carer, teacher/trusted member of staff, or an organisation such as Childline/CEOP
- The school Internet access is filtered through the C2k managed service
- No filtering service is 100% effective, therefore an adult supervises all children's use of the Internet
- Use of the Internet is a planned activity. Aimless surfing is not encouraged. Children are taught to use the Internet in response to a need e.g. a question that has arisen from work in class
- Pupils will be taught what Internet use is acceptable and what is not and given clear objectives for Internet use
- Pupils will be educated in the effective use of the Internet in research, including the skills of knowledge location, retrieval and evaluation
- The school will ensure that the use of Internet derived materials by staff and pupils complies with copyright law
- Children should understand that while AI is a useful tool for exploring and generating ideas, it must not replace the essential skills of critical thinking and evaluation
- Pupils should be taught to be critically aware of the materials they read and shown how to validate information before accepting its accuracy
- Children are taught to be Internet Wise. Children are made aware of Internet Safety Rules and are encouraged to discuss how to cope if they come across inappropriate material

Social Networking

- The school C2k system will block access to social networking sites
- Pupils and parents will be advised that the use of social network spaces outside school is inappropriate for primary aged pupils. However, if some pupils still use them, they are advised never to give out personal details of any kind, which may identify them or their location
- If pupils do use social networking spaces, we would advise that parents/carers set and maintain profiles on such sites to maximum privacy and deny access to unknown individuals
- School staff will not add children as 'friends' if they use these sites

Mobile Technologies

- Staff should not store pupils' personal data and photographs on memory sticks
- Pupils are not allowed to use personal mobile devices/phones/ Smart Watches (in school) during class
- Staff should not use personal mobile phones during designated teaching sessions

Managing Video-conferencing

- Video-conferencing will be via Teams or Zoom to ensure quality of service and security
- Video-conferencing will be appropriately supervised

Publishing Pupils' Images and Work

- Written permission from parents or carers will be obtained before photographs of children are published on the school Website and social media accounts. This consent form is considered valid for the entire period that the child attends this school unless there is a change in the child's circumstances where consent could be an issue
- Parents/carers may withdraw permission, in writing, at any time
- Photographs that include pupils will be selected carefully and **will not** enable individual pupils to be clearly identified
- Pupils' full names will not be used anywhere on the School Website, particularly in association with photographs
- Photographs of individual pupils will not be permitted without parental consent. Only pictures of groups or group activities will be used
- Pupil's work can only be published by outside agencies with the permission of the pupil and parents

Policy Decisions

Authorising Internet access

- Access to the Internet will be supervised
- All parents will be asked to sign the Acceptable Use Agreement for pupils giving consent for their child to use the Internet in school by following the school's Online Safety rules and within the constraints detailed in the school's Online Safety policy

Password Security

- Adult users are provided with an individual login username and password, which they are encouraged to change periodically. Login details should not be shared with pupils
- All pupils are provided with an individual login username and password
- Pupils are not allowed to deliberately access files on the school network that belong to peers, teachers or others
- Staff are aware of their individual responsibilities to protect the security and confidentiality of the school network, MIS systems
- All staff must not share their print release code with pupils.

Handling Online Safety Complaints

- Complaints of Internet misuse will be dealt with by a senior member of staff
- Deliberate access to inappropriate materials by any user will lead to the incident being logged by the ICT Co-ordinators and *reported to the safeguarding team*
- Any complaints about staff misuse must be referred to the Principal
- Complaints of a child protection nature must be dealt with in accordance with school child protection procedures
- Pupils and parents will be informed of the complaints' procedure

Communicating the Policy

Introducing the Online Safety Policy to pupils

- Online Safety rules will be discussed in all classrooms and displayed in the ICT suite. Specific lessons will be taught by class teachers at the beginning of every year and at relevant points throughout e.g. during PDMU lessons/ circle times/ anti-bullying week
- Pupils will be informed that network and Internet use will be monitored
- SMART crew resources will be used with children in school during an internet safety assembly
- When appropriate, outside speakers will be brought in to inform pupils

Staff and the Online Safety Policy

- All staff will be instructed to read the school's Online Safety Policy
- Any information downloaded must be respectful of copyright, property rights and privacy
- Staff should be aware that Internet traffic could be monitored and traced to the individual user discretion and professional conduct is essential
- A Surface Pro/iPad issued to a member of staff remains the property of the school. Users of such equipment should therefore adhere to school policy regarding appropriate use with regard to Internet access, data protection and use of software, both in and out of school

Monitoring and review

This policy is implemented on a day-to day basis by all school staff and is monitored by the ICT Co-ordinators.

This policy is the Governors' responsibility and they will review its effectiveness annually. They will do this during reviews conducted between the ICT Co-ordinators and Designated Child Protection Co-ordinators.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the ICT co-ordinators and be shared with SLT and Governors.

Last reviewed and ratified by Board of Governors: September 2025

Next review date: September 2027

Signed:  (Chair of Board of Governors)

Safety Rules for Children

Follow these SMART TIPS

S

Secret – Always keep your name, address, mobile phone number and password private – it's like giving out the keys to your home!

M

Meeting someone you have contacted in cyberspace can be dangerous. Only do so with your parent's/carer's permission, and then when they can be present.

A

Accepting e-mails or opening files from people you don't really know or trust can get you into trouble – they may contain viruses or nasty messages.

R

Remember someone on-line may be lying and not be who they say they are. Stick to the public areas in chat rooms and if you feel uncomfortable simply get out of there!

T

Tell your parent or carer if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried.

