**Online Safety and Resilience**

Technology is constantly evolving and sometimes it can feel hard to keep up. It’s easy to see the way young people use technology and feel that they are the experts - they navigate between apps, create and send video messages at a rate that can be dizzying to many adults. However, lots of us are savvier than we give ourselves credit for. There are plenty of good resources out there giving advice on keeping our children safe online and keeping up-to-date ([ThinkUKnow](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/)).

Online safety runs throughout the PSHE curriculum. We need to help young people explore the risks they may face online in a safe, non-judgmental environment to prepare them for the realities of the online world. We know young people often respond best exploring solutions themselves, in a skills based approach, talking about the positives of the online world, as well as the risks. Parents/carers can support this learning through discussions at home.

Sometimes adults can get bogged down in knowing all the intricacies of the latest apps young people are using. In a fast changing world we need to keep up-to-date, but communicating some guiding principles of being safe online to our young people, regardless of which apps they are using, can be more help in the long run. For example, the importance of keeping personal information private. However, [Net Aware](https://www.net-aware.org.uk/) has lists of websites and apps to support your knowledge.

**Concerns around technology**

A major concern parents/carers have about their child’s use of the internet is their safety.

It’s important to have parental controls set up on a device for a child, if they are going to be using it unsupervised, but it’s also important to talk about what they do, and why you want to protect them from certain content. [Safer Internet Centre](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parental-controls-offered-your-home-internet-provider) has advice about parental controls.

Young people have a right to privacy, especially as they get older. If you ask to read your child’s messages they are likely to be uncomfortable and this in itself isn’t necessarily a red flag. The time to be concerned is when a young person becomes secretive or withdrawn. It could be that there is something more risky happening, this could be bullying, harassment of some kind or grooming. If you are concerned, the best thing to do is to have a calm conversation with your child about these risks, and how they can get help if they need it.

It is not advisable to use tracking/hacking apps which give you access to the young person’s data without their knowledge, this breaks down trust on both sides and there are many apps which circumvent this activity anyway.

If your child is facing a problem online it’s good to know they have a safe space at home to open up.The [NSPCC](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/) has advice for parents wanting to talk to children about online safety.

**Online grooming**

Grooming is when someone uses the internet to trick, force or influence a young person into doing something sexual. Often by forming an online friendship or relationship, establishing common ground, and gaining their trust. So it can be hard for the young person to recognise the danger.

Young people can talk to others online, including via gaming platforms, who might not be who they say they are. All genders can be at risk, and it can happen to any child, so it’s wise to talk to your child about how they can keep safe. For more information go to [Internet Matters](https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Internet-Matters-Guide-Online-grooming-what-parents-need-to-know.pdf)

**Screen-time**

We might have concerns about screen time, with many apps encouraging users to keep [coming back](https://soundcloud.com/swgfl/what-is-persuasive-design). However, it’s important to be aware of how technology is used, rather than simply how often. For example, if your child has spent two hours working on an assignment, a strict screen time limit might be inappropriate. Instead, it is important to discuss the various activities that your child is undertaking to help them manage their screen time.

Another consideration is how you might be a role model. If at 5 o’clock you put your work laptop away and immediately pick up your phone for an hour, it’s likely your child will expect to do the same. Agree boundaries together that all will be able to stick to and try to ensure each day has some time away from the screen - perhaps create a [family agreement](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/free-internet-safety-resources-parents).

Perhaps consider time away from screens before bed? As a family you might decide to put all electronic devices away by a certain time, to help unwind, and spend some quality time together.

The best way to support your child to cope with the risks they face online is to have open conversations about technology regularly, show an interest in your child’s online world and agree boundaries that the whole family can stick to.