



## **Stay Safe Online!**

At St. Mary's Catholic Primary school, we understand that the online world is a significant part of our pupils' lives and that it can be a positive tool, e.g. to enhance their learning. We also know that there are risks posed to pupils online.

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### **What Is Social Media?**

Social media includes apps where people message, share photos, videos, and play games. Some common ones are:

- **WhatsApp** – chat and send pictures
  - **Snapchat** – share quick pictures and messages that disappear
  - **TikTok, YouTube, Instagram** – watch and post videos
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### **What Are the Risks?**

The online world is constantly evolving which means the risks children can face also change. Here, we have provided information on some of the categories of potential harms that children can face online:

#### **1. Talking to Strangers**

Some people online aren't who they say they are. Oversharing personal information, like location or details about friends, can put children at risk.

#### **2. Cyberbullying**

Unkind messages can hurt feelings and cause stress. Primary-aged children are vulnerable to cyberbullying, which can be harmful and cause emotional distress.

#### **3. Contact**

This involves being subjected to harmful online interaction with others online, e.g. peer pressure, commercial advertising, and adults posing as children or young adults with the intent to groom or exploit children.

#### **4. Inappropriate Content**

Videos or pictures not meant for children can appear. Children may encounter inappropriate content, including violent, aggressive, or sexual images and comments.

#### **5. Disappearing Messages**

Apps like Snapchat make it hard for adults to know what's being shared.

## **6. Pressure to Look or Act a Certain Way**

Social media can make kids feel like they need to be “perfect.”

## **7. Mental Health Impacts**

Social media use can lead to increased anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. Children may compare themselves to others online, leading to negative self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. They may also develop a sense of "fear of missing out" (FOMO) and feel stressed about staying connected.

## **8. Addiction and Excessive Use**

Social media can be addictive, leading to excessive use and a neglect of other important activities like schoolwork, exercise, and family time.

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## **Tips for Parents: How to Keep Your Child Safe**

As parents, you play an essential role in protecting your children online. There are lots of ways you can help to minimise the risks and increase the awareness of online safety in your home. We have listed some of the ways you can do this below

- **Talk about apps** your child is using.
- **Set accounts to private.**
- **Use parental controls** and kids' versions of apps (e.g. YouTube Kids).
- **Keep screens in family areas.**
- **Check in regularly** and ask how your child feels online.
- **Set screen time limits** together.
- **Check your child's phone**

As adults it is important to monitor what our children are looking at online and check apps they are using such as Whats App or any online communication site. Also, to monitor what they are looking at online in sites such as You Tube.

Discuss rules with your child for being online and draw them up together, including which sites, games, etc., are acceptable. If certain games are off-limits, try to explain why – for example, because of excessive violence. If your child uses online gaming, consider setting rules such as only talking to others in the same age range and having the conversation on speaker, rather than headphones, so you can monitor it

Keep an open dialogue with your child – letting them know they can always talk to you about anything that has made them feel uncomfortable online is key to keeping them safe.

Ensure all devices used by your child are kept in a communal space, or a space where they can be supervised whilst using their devices.

Set parental controls – do this as a dialogue with your child so they are aware of what they are not allowed to view; however, do not rely on parental controls on devices, as they are not always 100 percent effective and many children know how to bypass them.

Explain to your child that they can always tell you, a teacher or another adult if they experience anything which makes them feel uncomfortable.

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## **Tips for Kids: Be Smart and Safe!**

- Don't share your real name, school, or where you live.
- Never send photos to strangers.
- Be kind – if you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online.
- Talk to an adult if anything online makes you feel upset or confused.

## **Important links to support parents**

There are many websites that give parents information on how to keep their children safe online. Below are some very helpful websites and useful links.

NSPCC – This is a very helpful website that covers all areas of internet use.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/>

Internet Matters – Helping your child to stay safe online

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

Thinkuknow - Helpful information for all age groups

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

UK Safer Internet Centre -

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>