

## Risks your child may face online

As with the real world, there are risks online and it's important that you teach your child how to navigate them.

- Cyberbullying
- Grooming
- Inappropriate Websites
- Losing control over pictures and videos
- Online Reputation
- Overuse/Addiction
- Viruses, hacking and security

### Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when someone uses the internet or technology to bully someone else. Because we use the internet and technology everywhere, this type of bullying can affect young people not just at school, but at home as well. It can sometimes be hard to identify who the bully is because they can block their number, email, or post things on websites anonymously. The nature of this bullying means it can have a large audience, many of whom may not even realise they are being bullied. This kind of bullying can be evidenced. With bullying before this technology, it could be one person's word against another's, but with cyberbullying you can save texts or print out emails / IM's / Webpages. This can be used as proof to catch the bully. If your child has been cyberbullied, make sure that they:

- Do not respond to the bully.

- Block contact with the bully.
  - Save relevant communication, such as texts, emails or webpages.
- Report the incident either to the website or service provider, your child's school or, if it is persistent harassment, to the police.

### Grooming

You've probably heard of the term 'grooming' before. In essence, this is a process used by people with a sexual interest in children to attempt to engage them in sexual acts either over the internet or in person.

Sadly, these people do attempt to make contact with children over the internet. This may be in social networking sites, chatrooms or games. They could be pretending to be someone else, or showing an interest in them.

It is important that children understand that people like this exist and that they should never do anything online or offline that they are uncomfortable with.

Grooming is a process of manipulating a child to gain control over them; as a parent or carer you should be approachable so that if your child is concerned about something, they know they can talk to you.

If you are concerned about someone's behaviour towards your child, you can report this directly to CEOP.

Young people can report directly to CEOP and this can be done using the CEOP reporting button on the School's website

Inappropriate websites

The internet is open for anyone to post material on it; therefore sometimes your child may see things that they wish they hadn't, or are inappropriate for their age.

Parental controls can help reduce the risk of your child seeing age inappropriate sites. However, no parental filters are 100% effective and inappropriate material can always slip through the net.

You should encourage your child to tell you if they have seen anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or upset so that you can help them.

If you think the content might be illegal, like sexual images of children and young people, you can report it directly to an organisation called the Internet Watch Foundation: [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk). It's their job to make sure that things like this are taken off the internet.

**Losing control over pictures and videos**  
Pictures and videos can be copied, shared and spread at great speed. What may have started as being posted for a few friends can very quickly end up in the hands of the entire school and beyond. Some young people have posted or sent sexualised pictures of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend and found them shared further. Some of the main risks with this type of im-

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age being in the hands of someone else include:

- **Bullying** – young people can be bullied by others about the content of pictures.
- **Distress** – knowing that other people they do not know are looking at personal pictures can be very upsetting.
- **Blackmail** – if the images end up in the hands of someone with bad intentions, they may be used to attempt to manipulate the child.
- **Reputation** – once something is online it is very difficult to remove. Images can become part of a young person's 'digital footprint' and potentially affect them in the long-term, such as if someone searches their name as part of a job interview.

#### **Online reputation**

Young people are growing up online and may be posting information which in the past would have been written in their secret diary. These thoughts, opinions and activities provide a window to their lives at a time where jobs and responsibility might be far from their minds.

The internet provides permanent records of these high and lows which, if not controlled carefully, may be accessible to future employers, universities or friends.

Young people should think about what they share, where they share it and who they share it with – what seems funny now, may not do in the future

#### **Overuse/ addiction**

With limitless information, endless games and the ability to escape from the real world, young people's relationship with the internet can become unhealthy.

This can be a problem when a young person's online behaviour diverts and distracts them from other activities – this might be school work, seeing their friends or even sleeping and eating. The amount of time young people spend playing games can become unhealthy. If they are gaming against people around the world, they may want to be involved in activities that take place at unsocial-

ble hours and may find it difficult to stop. The fact that other players are real people can put pressure on young people to take part as they don't want to let their gaming friends down.

Young people can be someone else online. Therefore, if they are unhappy in the real world, they may want to spend more time online.

As a parent or carer, you should be alert to the amount of time they are spending online and aware of the issues that might be causing a dependency.

**Viruses, hacking and your computer's security**  
Computers are such an important part of our everyday lives now, so it is important to keep them healthy.

Get Safe Online provide lots of information on the risks posed to your computer's security and also how you can protect your computer from viruses, hacking and other nasties!

Visit [www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org) for further information.

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