SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

St Cuthbert's
ROMAN CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

FEBRUARY 2022

ONLINE SAFETY UPDATE – TIPS AND TRENDS

6 TOP TIPS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN ONLINE

Safeguarding first.
The safety and wellbeing of children always comes first.

Approach from the perspective of the child.
This means understanding what being online means to them and exploring the positive opportunities it presents, as well as the risks.

Promote dialogue and understanding.
Young people are safest when they feel listened to and understood and know that they can ask trusted adults for help when they need it.

Empower and enable children.
Children have the right to be protected from harm, and to be supported to build knowledge, skills and confidence which will help them identify risk and access support when they need it.

Never frighten or scare-monger.
Alarmist education can be risky and ineffective. Avoid shocking or scaring children and young people, their families, or other professionals.

Challenge victim-blaming attitudes.
We all have a responsibility to challenge victim-blaming whenever it arises. To help young people understand that abuse is never the fault of those who have been harmed and builds their confidence to ask a trusted adult for help when they need it.

Directors of the Trust with a responsibility for Safeguarding

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Designated Safeguarding Leads

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Support & Further Information

- Nationalonlinesafety.com – Training and advice for teachers and parents
- Childnet.com/teachers-and-professionals – Lots of information and resources around all areas of online safety
- Internetmatters.org/schools-esafety/primary/ - Guides on key issues involving online safety
- Thinkuknow.co.uk – is the education programme from NCA-CEOP which is a UK based organisation that protects children both online and offline.

Evolving Risks to Children Online

Disconnection

The rise of immersive VR and AI realities may see vulnerable young people begin to distance themselves from the real world. Ignoring meaningful connection with friends and family, fixating on their phones or consoles, and neglecting responsibilities like schoolwork or extracurriculars are all very real risks that could negatively impact a young person's development.

Gambling behaviours

There has been a rise in types of cryptocurrencies being offered as rewards for gaming, alongside NFTs and other 'valuable' online assets. Young people may be driven by a desire to 'get in on the ground floor' and could find themselves embroiled in gambling-like behaviours to obtain this valuable currency they may not be able to buy outright. This is a dangerous risk, as it could lead to addiction and financial difficulties in the future.

Media mistrust and cynicism

Changing attitudes towards news outlets, scientific research, and personal preferences will continue to impact how young people are making and forming their opinions. 52% of young people say they are unable to tell if a news story they see on social platforms is true. Furthermore, while 68% of young people trust their families to tell them about most world news, only 19% of them actively engage in these conversations.

Online Radicalisation

Spending more time online during the pandemic has created an environment that puts vulnerable young people at risk for radicalisation. Radical groups will continue to exploit feelings of loneliness and isolation to recruit younger members to their cause. Recently, a 14-year-old boy was convicted with terror charges and other young people in the UK have been investigated for connections to terror attacks

Reliance on technology

After two years of schooling online, socialising online, shopping online, and everything in between, it's no wonder that most people are 'nomophobics' – the term for someone afraid to not have their phone with them. But it's not just smartphones that have created our technological world. Most children spend most of the time on tablets, watching television, or asking Alexa for homework help. This reliance has a proven link to sleep disturbances and depressive behaviour.

TRENDS & THREATS

Peer- on peer abuse – also know as 'cyberbullying' the harmful online behaviours some children experience, may take on new and unexpected form, with new platforms, features and technology.

Misinformation – if 2021 saw a boost in conspiracies and "fake news", then 2022 is set for a bang. 57% of young people get their news from social media platforms. With more platforms taking on 'Tic Tok style' short form video, visual misinformation is easier to consume with fewer fact checks and sources.

Scams – Unfortunately, scammers seem to move with every new online trend as they find a way to manipulate popular topics or platforms in their favour. Last year saw an increase in financial scams like WhatsApp, which is expected to continue this year.

Sexual exploitation – Since the start of the global pandemic there has been an exponential rise in sexual exploitation and abuse online. Last year the internet watch foundation warned that nearly half (44%) of the imagery it acted on was on 'self-generated', which was a 77% increase from the statistics in 2019.