

Safeguarding Newsletter

Autumn Term 2019

Here comes Christmas!



Keeping Children Safe Online

Christmas is just around the corner and we're sure that mobile phones, tablets and gaming consoles will be on lots of children's Christmas lists! Technology and the internet now plays a huge role in young people's lives but it's important to be aware of the risks that un-restricted access to the internet can pose. Here are a few tips to help you stay in control.

1. Set Parental Controls

It is not as difficult as it seems to set parental controls on most electronic devices. A few clicks can really make a difference and ensure that the children aren't able to access any unsuitable content. Google the website www.internetmatters.org and you will find a comprehensive guide for setting parental controls for all internet providers, phones, tablets and gaming consoles.

2. Agree time limits

Too much screen time can lead to children becoming tired, irritable and less active. Try to agree time limits for children and stick to them. Don't allow the children to use electronic devices at bedtime: the NHS recommend that children of primary school age require between 9 ½ and 11 ½ hours of sleep per day and it has been proven that screen time inhibits sleep.

3. Pay attention to PEGI Ratings.

On the box of all computer games, there is a PEGI rating. PEGI ratings informs parents about the recommended age of suitability and about the nature of any potentially unsuitable content.

The school has received some concerns about our pupils' use of the popular app 'TikTok.' Here is some information about the app and some of the potential risks involved.

- TikTok is a global video community where users create, share and discover 'funny and memorable moments' via short video clips – typically about 15 seconds long. Videos can be 'spiced up' with special effect filters, stickers, music and sound clips.
- By default, users accounts are automatically set to public when they first create an account. TikTok encourages users to share creative expression through their videos, but if posted publicly, anyone in the world can see your child's homemade content. There have also been concerns the Chinese government could access data or sway public opinion through the app. If your child's profile is open, strangers can use the app to comment on your child's videos. While this isn't always sinister, it gives potential predators the ability to contact your child through the platform.
- As with many apps, there's a paid element to TikTok. Users can buy virtual coins to be exchanged for virtual gifts – for example, if they like a specific video, your child can use coins to purchase emojis to show approval. These can be expensive and easily purchased – there is the option to buy 10,000 coins for £99.99 with a one-click buy button.
- TikTok lets users lip-sync to their favourite songs and produce their own music videos. Some of the music choices contain swear words or sexual themes. So not only can children be exposed to potentially inappropriate content but they can broadcast themselves miming or singing these lyrics.
- More than one third of children aged 6-17 consider 'social media stars' to be among their top role models. There are millions of creators on TikTok, showcasing their 'talents, moments and knowledge', from singing to dancing to stunts and comedy skits, which receive thousands of likes and comments from around the world, quickly turning people into 'stars'. There is the danger that children may develop unrealistic expectations of how they should look and behave on the app in order to become the next 'star'. They may have feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem or become swayed by certain opinions.
- The age restriction on TikTok is 13+ but lots of primary school children use the app. Whilst we would strongly recommend adhering to the age restriction; should your child have access to the app, please be aware of the risks and ensure that you monitor your child's internet use.

Access our school website to find links to helpful websites filled with tips and advice about keeping your children safe online.

<http://www.district.st-helens.sch.uk>