

# Online Safety – Useful websites for schools

## **Introduction**

During the Covid 19 pandemic the time that children and young people spend online has no doubt increased greatly. Whilst there are huge benefits to being online in order to access teaching, as well as staying connected friends during this period there may be many parents (and teachers) who may feel concerned about the activities and content their children and young adults are accessing. This document outlines websites with advice to help keep children safe from different risks online and where to go to receive support and advice. The document also includes an article about what schools can do to support keeping children safe online during lockdown.

Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic school websites will have already contained advice on keeping safe online whether this was part of a safeguarding section or a separate internet safety section. As we are unaware of how long the current lockdown will last there may be parents who are struggling with online learning not understanding what their children are engaged in. If parents are in this position, they may consult a school website for help and support. It may therefore be worthwhile when time permits, to reassess what support is available on the school website and promote this support to parents.

Schools may find some of the websites detailed below contain documents and resources useful to support parents with children working at home to ensure that they stay safe whilst working online. In addition to this, teachers may find these websites useful to support with the delivery of online safety teaching or with pastoral issues that may crop up once schools return to face to face learning.

## **Guidance from DFE**



For most school leaders the DFE is probably the starting point for information. DFE guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-keeping-children-safe-online/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-parents-and-carers-to-keep-children-safe-online>

The site states, “Whilst there are huge benefits to being online in order to stay connected to family and friends during this period, the government recognises many parents may feel concerned about the activities and content their children are accessing. This guidance outlines resources to help keep children safe from different risks online and where to go to receive support and advice.”

It is perhaps worth noting that this guidance was last updated in June 2020 however there are links to other useful sites where resources and advice can be found which are more up to date.

A number of the websites on the DFE website are included below with a brief summary of the content they contain.

The Net Aware website is produced by the NSPCC and can be accessed here:

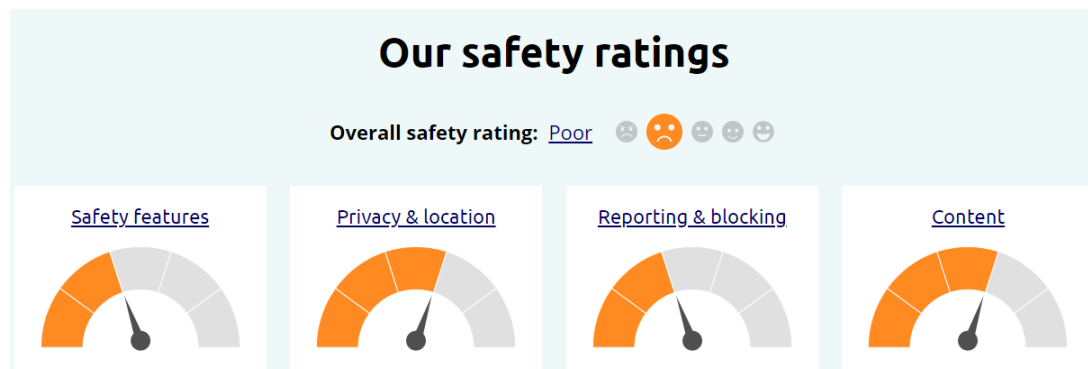
<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

This is part of the larger NSPCC website which offers a range of support to parents to support children through the Covid 19 pandemic.



The website is up to date with the last article - **8 tips for keeping your kids safe online during lockdown** being published on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021. This article contains 8 tips for parents to support them to stay safe online. Most tips encourage parents to speak to their children about online safety and encourages parents to understand the apps and programmes that children may be using. To support with this there are links to different content. The website is easy to navigate and would be suitable for parents to look at with their children.

The website also contains a useful section on mobile phone apps which explains what the app does. The site also rates each app for overall safety, safety features, privacy and location, ability to report or block other users and content.



In addition to this site NSPCC also has their own learning site:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/may/online-safety-during-coronavirus>

This site is updated regularly however is a more formal site than Net Aware. It is more for parents to look than parents sharing with their children. It does contain the following sections:

- Introduction to online safety
- Communicating with children online
- Supporting parents and carers
- Supporting children and young people

## **National Online Safety Website**

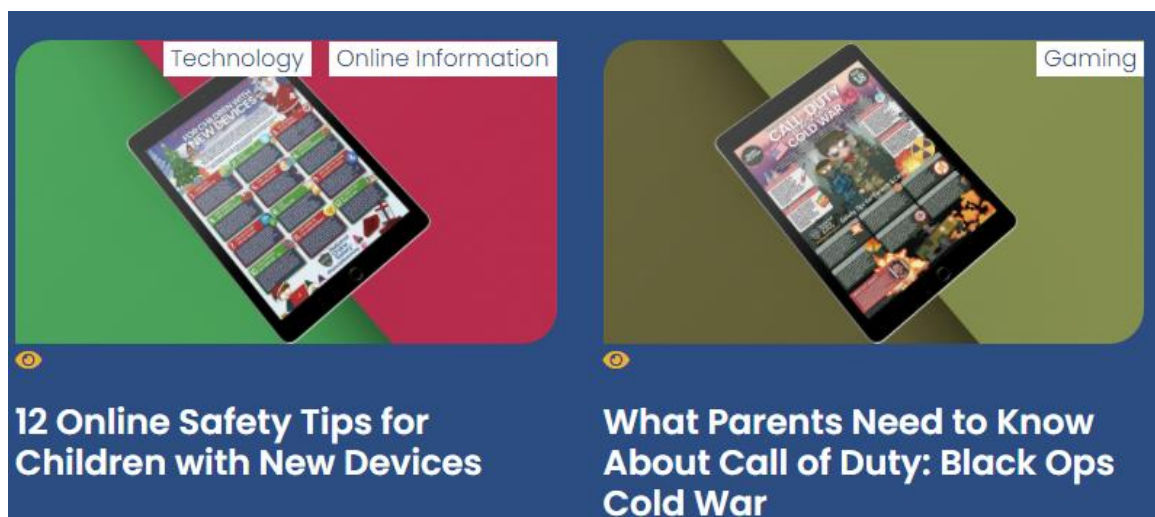


This website can be accessed at a number of levels from a free subscription for parents and parents up to a full paid school membership.

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/>

If parents and teachers create a free account they will still have access to a number of useful resources that parents can access including:

- NOS courses for parents – these four videos summarise for different age ranges what children may be accessing online. The video is followed by links so that parents can further understand the apps or activities that are described.
- A4 guides to explain and support parents. There are a massive number of guides which are all well presented and would allow parents to talk through the guides with children. There is a large range of content including information around setting up devices, web browsing, gaming, social media and remote learning.



- For younger children the parents section also contains a storybook called Oscar's Adventures in the Online World which can be downloaded and shared with children.

If teachers create accounts on the site they will get additional access to other materials.

If parents prefer all of the content can be accessed through an app on a mobile phone which is available on the Apple App Store or Google Play.

A number of schools in the city have already downloaded some of the guides and have incorporated them into their Internet Safety for parents' section.

## **Childnet**



Childnet has developed guidance for parents and carers to begin a conversation about online safety, as well as guidance on keeping under-fives safe online.

<https://www.childnet.com/>

The website contains sections for children (primary and secondary) as well parents and teachers. In the parents section the information is broken down as follows:

- Looking for advice on where to begin?
- Looking for more information on a topic?
- Looking for advice on talking to your child about staying safe online?
- Looking for help with an online safety concern?

Each section contains pdf documents with information to read and also suggested conversations that parents can have with their children around their internet activity and safety.

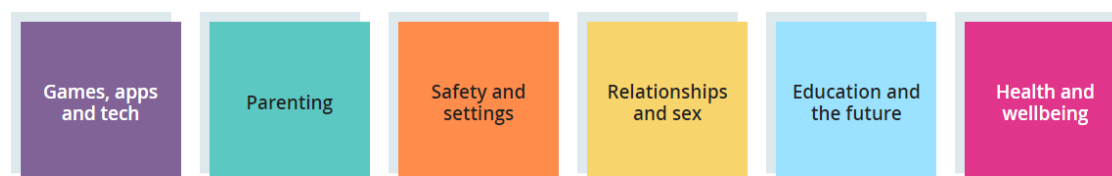
## **Parentinfo**



Parent Info is a collaboration between Parent Zone and NCA-CEOP, providing support and guidance for parents and carers related to the digital world from leading experts and organisations.

<https://parentinfo.org/>

The site contains a range of articles that may support parents during lockdown which includes topics around online safety but also more general guidance around parenting during this lockdown period.



The website is perhaps more text based than other sites mentioned however the breadth of content on offer may support parents with topic such as:

- Screen time: should I be worried?
- The 6 apps and services that every parent should know about

- Surviving family life under lockdown
- How to celebrate special occasions during lockdown
- Where can your child get mental health support online during lockdown?

## **The UK Safer Internet Centre**



UK Safer Internet Centre provides tips and advice for parents and carers to keep children safe online - you can also report any harmful content found online through the UK Safer Internet Centre.

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>

## **SWGFL**



SWGFL are a charitable trust dedicated to empowering the safe and secure use of technology through innovative services, tools, content and policy, nationally and globally. They have a section on their website dedicated to supporting schools, parents and children during the pandemic.

<https://swgfl.org.uk/coronavirus/>

They have produced a wide range of tools, advice and resources that can help although looking at the site the resources and articles are perhaps more for teachers rather than parents however there are some detailed articles here.

## **Thinkuknow**



Thinkuknow is the education programme from NCA-CEOP, a UK organisation which protects children both online and offline. The site includes six Thinkuknow websites for advice about staying safe when you're on a phone, tablet or computer. This is an extensive website with lots of information however the site does not contain a lot of specific content around lockdown.

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

One of the websites is aimed at teachers with another 4 containing appropriate material for pupils of different ages: 5-7, 8-10, 11-13 and 14+. The final one of these six websites is aimed at parents and carers directly.

The parents' part of the website contains content for parents to read if they are concerned about their child's online activities. It also contains a range of videos that parents can watch and discuss with their children along with activity packs that parents and children can work through together.

## **Keeping pupils safe online during lockdown – article by Kathryn Day**

**Online safety has become even more of a priority for schools and families during the coronavirus lockdown. Kathryn Day describes how schools can promote online safety while children are away from the classroom. Kathryn is a CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) Ambassador, former primary school deputy head, secondary ICT subject leader and local authority computing advisor.**

Online safety is a challenge for schools at the best of times. But with the coronavirus pandemic closing school gates to the majority of pupils, it is much harder to ensure that children travel safely on their journeys through cyberspace.

Away from school and with time on their hands, children are at a greater risk than ever from online dangers.

### **Out of sight**

While many children are lucky enough to have a structured learning timetable, parental support and controlled access to the internet while at home, others are not so fortunate. Parents who are under extreme pressure due to high workloads, financial or health concerns may find it difficult to keep tabs on their children's online activities.

Children are naturally curious, and if they have unfettered access to internet-enabled devices they could stray into risky territory all too easily. It only takes a few clicks of a mouse or swipes of a screen and a primary school child could be watching inappropriate YouTube videos or taking part in an unmoderated chatroom.

Similarly, it does not take much for a child to stumble across dangerous content by mistake. A visit to a seemingly innocent online game can be a cleverly disguised route into more sinister waters, such as a self-harming site or pro-anorexia forum.

### **Risky behaviour**

As many an education profession would say, it is not the devices that are the problem, it is the behaviour. And poor behaviour can have a far-reaching impact. While primary age children are more likely to listen to advice about how to communicate online, year 7 and 8 pupils are of an age where the temptation to take risks is at a peak.

In the current climate when children are isolated, anxious or bored, they may seek to make themselves feel better by tormenting others with unkind messages or excluding them from group chats. Some children could take advantage of lockdown by engaging in cyber-bullying in the knowledge that they will not have to account for their behaviour at school.

Peer pressure can extend its influence online too. Unable to goad one another in the playground, young teenagers could resort to showing off on social media by pretending they are going out whenever they like, staying up all night and not doing a shred of homework.

## **So, what steps can schools take to keep their pupils safe online?**

### **Offer support and guidance to parents**

Schools can continue to play a key role in reinforcing the online safety message, even from a distance. Many parents will be consulting schools' social media feeds during the closures, so consider reaching out to parents and offering advice and support through the channels they use every day.

Your school's website can be an effective way to make parents aware of organisations which specialise in online safety. For instance, Internet Matters has some good, practical advice for parents, including on how to have a conversation about cyber-bullying with your child.

Openness is essential in helping children understand the dangers of the online world, and equipping them to tackle problems if they arise, and this resource could give parents a helping hand in opening up a dialogue with their child. Internet Matters also offers invaluable advice on setting up parental controls on gadgets, apps and devices.

Elsewhere, there is also advice from the NSPCC, while the Department for Education has published guidance for schools (DfE, 2020) which includes a range of useful links for parents/carers.

Another useful link to include on your school website is CEOP, an organisation which protects children and young people from sexual abuse and online grooming. CEOP can also provide a lifeline for older pupils who are worried about something that has happened online to make them feel unsafe or scared.

### **Help pupils make the right choices**

For younger children, you could send out links to interactive games and quizzes, family-friendly apps and activities which educate pupils about online safety. The online safety charity, SWGfL, has some brilliant resources to help, including its Safe Remote Learning advice.

Some schools are also running lessons for children and their parents to take part in together online which is a great way to kick off conversations about how to stay safe.

Elsewhere, children in the later primary and early secondary years seem to be fluent in messaging platforms, but how well are they actually communicating to their friends? Messages can be misunderstood, and one misinterpreted comment could result in friendship groups falling out. Instead of messaging all the time, encourage pupils to talk to each other on Facetime, Zoom or Skype, as video calls are the closest thing you can get to real social contact. When children can see each other on screen, they are more likely to be kind.

For a child who is being bullied online but does not feel they can confide in anyone, Childline provides confidential advice on anything from reporting inappropriate images to concerns about Covid-19. Schools can make a big difference by raising pupils' awareness of this support.



## **Harness the positive**

At times like this it is more important than ever to focus on the positives, and schools can do much to encourage children to use online activity as a force for good.

One of the great things to emerge from our shared experience in lockdown is the torrent of creativity from funny videos and memes through to backyard sports tournaments. Challenge your pupils to use their own creative spirit in their online interactions, and get them to share their best endeavours.

Rather than advising against spending time on the games console, you could point children in the direction of games that encourage collaboration and communication as well as fun.

Some online games open up whole avenues for creativity. For example, my son is an avid Minecraft player and he and his friends build things together. It is a way for them to communicate while creating something at the same time.

Schools can use their own social media feed to keep in touch with pupils, and this in turn will inspire children to use platforms creatively to reach out to their own families and friends.

One school filmed its teachers, caretakers and admin staff reading extracts from books in different rooms around the school, and shared the videos with pupils. This helped to remind their younger pupils that the school will still be there for them when lockdown comes to an end.

Schools can also be a valuable source of support to older pupils who are anxious about the coronavirus pandemic. Consider providing children with links to reliable sources such as the BBC or the NHS. This will keep your pupils informed and steer them away from fake news and conspiracy theories that only serve to increase anxiety levels.

Even though most pupils are away from the classroom right now, there is plenty that can be done to get the online safety message across, and to provide practical ways to make sure children enjoy their online interactions.

By highlighting the positive ways children can use technology in these extraordinary times, schools will embed a culture of responsible, resourceful and safe online activity.

This article can be found on SecEd at:

<https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/keeping-pupils-safe-online-during-lockdown-esafety-technology-coronavirus-covid-19-schools/>