

12th March 2015

Dear Parents and Carers,

E-Safety – Guidance for Parents and Carers

Over the past few weeks our Key Stage 2 children have been participating in E-Safety talks which emphasise safe use of the internet, highlighting some of the potential dangers arising from unsafe use of the amazing tool which is the World-Wide-Web! As part of this discussion we have raised children's awareness of the importance of the privacy settings on gaming consoles such as Playstations and Xbox and other interactive games. From these discussions the children were highlighting the different 'apps' and websites they access on a regular basis.

Many of the children are aware of the dangers in regard of surfing the internet itself; their conversation leads me to believe they might be less vigilant when they play using apps and games on the consoles. At present, I feel there is a risk that some of the children are not taking simple steps to guarantee they are protected.

There is an extremely helpful website supported by the NSPCC and 'Netmums' which provides details on many of the popular sites that children aged 8 to 12 are accessing:

<http://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/?order=-popularity>

Many of your children were able to highlight apps and websites which they have accessed at home - some you may not be aware of! I have spent some time researching some of the sites the children have discussed with us and having spoken with KS2 pupils it is apparent that some of these sites are encouraging children to talk to random strangers. This raises huge concerns for me and our teaching staff and we felt we needed to share these concerns with you.

Here are a small sample of the apps children have discussed with me – and some of the sites children tell us they have visited:

MovieStarPlanet

MovieStarPlanet is an online game. Visitors can create a famous movie star character to talk to others in the chat room, play games and watch videos. Age 8+

48% of the children and young people asked by net-aware.org.uk think MovieStarPlanet can be 'risky'. The top 3 concerns were:

1. Talking to strangers
2. Sexual content
3. Hacking

"People can message you and tell you to take your character's top off." Girl aged 15.
(Source: www.net-aware.org.uk)

Please turn over

Omegle: Talk to Strangers

Omegle is a social networking site that randomly connects you to another person who is on the site. It lets you talk to them in a one-to-one audio or video conversations. You can both appear as anonymous, unless you decide to share your personal information.

On accessing the site I found there to be no age controls in place; in the small print there was a statement saying users must be 13 or over. Within minutes a child can be talking to a complete stranger.

What do children and young people say to look out for:

94% of the children and young people asked by www.net-aware.org.uk thought Omegle can be risky. The top concerns were:

1. Sexual content
2. Talking to strangers

Bin Weevils

Bin Weevils in an online virtual world where you can play free online games, chat with friends, adopt a virtual pet, grow your own garden and watch cartoons. Users can send messages to other players in the game.

What do children and young people say to look out for:

32% of the children and young people we asked think Bin Weevils can be risky. (Source: www.net-aware.org.uk) The top concerns were:

1. Bullying
2. Talking to strangers
3. Hacking

"You can chat to people you don't know and they can be rude to you and hurt your feelings." Girl aged 12. (Source: www.net-aware.org.uk)

Are Your Children Safe Playing 'Apps' Online?

In light of my findings and discussions with our pupils I would like to invite you to an **E-Safety Information Evening** on **Tuesday 5th May 2015 at 7.00pm.** We will send out invitations nearer the time to gauge how many of you would like to come along.

At this meeting, I will cover areas of concern in more detail and outline how we can reduce the risk of our children being vulnerable in the online world. Children are being led to believe all 'apps' are safe because they are downloaded from Apple or well-known hubs. The problem is - they are not!

Yours sincerely,

Mr H Goldsmith
ICT Coordinator