

10th June 2019

Dear Parents

Sadly, here at Nicholas Hawksmoor, we are coming across more and more incidences of concern around the safety of children in the online world. With increasing numbers of children now owning smartphones along with having direct internet access within the home, it is becoming paramount that we ensure that we all keep up to date with new issues surrounding this ever-changing world in front of our children.

We continue to educate the children in school as to the importance of being safe online through our Health and Wellbeing curriculum alongside regular age-appropriate updates on the dangers children may face. However, it is outside of school when these dangers are really affecting them, and we are asking all parents to remain vigilant by having a greater understanding of what children are now facing and having to deal with.

The recent release of 'Breck's Last Game' highlights the dangers our children face when left to themselves online. It is frightening, but important that we take on board that these dangers are all too real. www.northants.police.uk/news/northants/news/campaigns/2019/april-19/brecks-last-game

It is not all doom and gloom however; there are a number of simple steps that we, as parents, can take to ensure that we support our children navigate safely through the online world. Many of these can be found on the documents attached but the questions we would like you to consider are below:

- Smartphones – Does your child really need one at primary school? More and more issues are arising both inside and outside of school due to children having free access to all social media platforms. If it is the ability to just stay in touch with your child, then a basic phone would do the job.
- Internet Access – Does your child have internet access in their bedroom? Is it being monitored? Could the upstairs of your home be allocated as a digital-free zone?
- Technology before bed – Does your child have enough time to 'unwind' before bedtime? We are seeing children who are looking more and more sleep-deprived and showing greater mental health concerns. Could this be the cause?
- Awareness of age-restrictions – As parents are we aware of, and do we adhere to, the age-restrictions for social media apps? None of our children should have accounts on Facebook and Instagram (13), Whatsapp (16), Youtube (18) and for a very good reason!
- Role-model healthy online behaviours – Are we 'practising what we preach' and setting the example to our children as to how much time is spent on the internet?

One of the most important things that can be done to establish a healthy environment is to work with your child/children to draw up an **online safety family agreement** – see attached document. It is important to set up ground rules and ensure that the children are involved and see the importance and reasoning behind it.

In addition, make sure you download the app **NetAware** from the NSPCC – this will help you stay up-to-date with some of the new apps and features that are out there that you may be unaware of.

Finally, the most important thing to do is **talk with your children**. Engage with them positively, an open and honest home environment will allow them to share with you when they have concerns and are worried.

And remember, if you have any direct concerns then please speak to myself or your child's class teacher immediately and we will always support you as best we can.

With best wishes

Joseph Fulford
Designated Safeguarding Lead
Deputy Head Teacher

