

Dear parents, carers and guardians.

Staying safe and being a good friend on apps, sites and games



Children and young people have spent much more time on devices than ever before as they become more involved in gaming, phones, social media, online platforms and through apps such as WhatsApp, Discord and messenger apps. Attached is a checklist to support parents with supporting children online safely so that our vulnerable young people are protected whilst online. I have also attached a poster with some information about staying safe online and principles you can help us remind your children about.

Please do not worry too much about screen time - think instead about screen quality, balance and mental health. The Children's Commissioner has provided a framework called the 'Digital Five a Day' with five things to think about each day to help put that into practice.

It is really important children get the opportunity to chat to friends, so it's great to hear that many of them have been chatting online and over mobile phone apps. We are sure that this will continue as they grow and build friendships at Maple House School, so please help us reinforce some key messages about appropriate behaviour to keep everyone safe and happy.

Please remind your children never to share scary or rude images, even to complain about them to the sender. If they do see something that worries them or that might be wrong, all they need to do is ask for help from a trusted adult. They could talk to you or to us, or they may feel more comfortable talking anonymously to Childline.

If you or they are concerned about an adult's behaviour towards a child online, report them to CEOP. And as a parent, you can also contact the NSPCC - advice line on 0808 800 5000.

One more thing - this may sound like more relevant to older children, but the very youngest children need reminding not to get undressed or changed online to keep them safe.

Thank you for your support - do let us know if you have any questions. You can contact us on 0121 805 1222 or email our DSL at [Ben.Connolly@rests-sen.uk](mailto:Ben.Connolly@rests-sen.uk)

Many thanks

Jay Rawlings



The **digital 5 a day** provides a simple framework that reflects the concerns of parents/ carers as well as children's behaviours and needs. It can also act as a base for family agreements about internet and digital device use throughout both the holidays and term time.

Based on the NHS's evidence-based [“five steps to better mental wellbeing”](#), the digital 5 a day campaign gives children and parents easy to follow, practical steps to achieve a healthy and balanced digital diet.

## 1. Connect

The internet has enabled everyone to maintain friendships and family relationships no matter where they are in the world and children often say that chatting with friends is the best thing about social media.

It's important to acknowledge that this is how children keep in touch but it's also important to have a conversation with them about who they are connecting with and their privacy settings. Remember to keep a dialogue open and talk to your child to understand how they're spending their time and so that they can come to you for help should they need to.

## 2. Be active

Activity is very important for mental wellbeing and all children should have time to switch off and get moving. Children don't have to be an athlete to be active. Find something that they enjoy – be that swimming, walking, dancing or yoga – begin at a level that works for them and make it a regular activity. Researching an activity or place online before going out is a good way of combining the two and provides an opportunity for you to use the internet together.

## 3. Get creative

The internet provides children with unlimited opportunities to learn and to be creative. From learning to code to building complex structures in Minecraft to creating video content, the summer can be a great opportunity for children to build their digital skills. Time spent online doesn't have to be spent passively consuming content. It can be educational, creative and can provide opportunities to build skills for later life.

## 4. Give to others

As well as using the internet to learn about how to get involved with local and national charitable schemes, children can give to others through their everyday activities. Remind children that by giving positive feedback and support to friends and family as well as reporting the negative behaviour of others, children can help the web make a positive place for everyone.

## 5. Be mindful

We hear that children often feel pressured by the constantly connected nature of the internet. While they might want to do other things, it can be difficult for them to put their phones down when apps are encouraging them to engage. Being mindful about the amount of time that your child is spending online – and encouraging them to be mindful about how this makes them feel – is important.

Encourage children to come up with ways of managing this i.e. keeping a diary as way of logging the amount of time they are spending online or downloading an app that helps them manage their notifications.

Children and young people are bound to spend lots more time on devices since Covid. **DON'T FEEL BAD** – lots will be schoolwork or healthy ways of catching up with friends or having fun. There are many ways to keep them safe, healthy and happy.

**Don't worry about screen time; aim for screen quality**

Scrolling through social media isn't the same as making a film or story, or Skyping Grandma. Use the Children's Commissioner's 'Digital Five A Day' to plan or review each day together.



**Check the safety settings are turned on**



Whether it's your home internet, mobile devices, consoles, apps or games, there are lots of settings to make them safer. The key ones are - can they chat to strangers, can they video chat or 'go live', are their posts public? **Internet Matters** has hundreds of guides to parental controls.

**Get your children to show you their apps and games**



You don't need to know all about the latest app or game, but if your child shows you what they are doing and with whom, you'll probably see if it's appropriate or not. Remember 18 games are not more advanced – they are harmful to children! For parent guides to apps, including recommendations for kidsafe apps and video platforms, search for **Common Sense Media** or **NSPCC's NetAware**. And why not download the **BBC Own It** app?

**Don't try to hide news about scary things in the news**



If you don't talk about it, your children might read inappropriate pages, believe scare stories or simply catastrophise in their heads. Why not watch **Newsround** together and talk about how they feel – there is guidance from **Childline** to help you.

**Remind them of key online safety principles**



There are too many to list, but remember human behaviour is the same online and offline. Remind your children to be a good friend, to ask for help if they are worried or if someone is mean, not to get undressed on camera and most important of all... if somebody tells them not to tell or ask for help because it's too late or they will get in trouble, **THAT'S A LIE!**

**If you aren't sure, ASK!**

Your school may be able to give you advice, but there are plenty of other places to ask for help as a parent or a child, whether it is advice or help to fix something. Lots of sites are listed at [reporting.lgfl.net](http://reporting.lgfl.net), including ones to tell your kids about (they might not want to talk to you in the first instance).



## Online Safety Checklist for Parents

- I am aware of the dangers to my child when using the Internet and digital technology. More information about the broad range of dangers can be found on the '[Teaching Online Safety in Schools](#)' publication.
- I set boundaries with my child on the amount of screen time they have. There is a suitable balance of time for remote working (where applicable), leisure and rest breaks.
- I regularly ask my child what websites they use and why they use them.
- I discuss with my child things they may have seen online that may have made them feel uncomfortable.
- I am aware of the applications that my child has installed on their phone/tablet.
- I have ensured all applications have sufficient privacy settings to restrict strangers from seeing content, messaging or following my child.
- I have asked my child about their online friends and who they are speaking to online. I have highlighted the dangers of talking to people you have never met in real life, even if you believe you know the person from speaking to them on an application or website.
- I have set appropriate parental controls on all digital devices my child uses including their computer, mobile phone, tablet or gaming device.
- I have been clear with my child that they should speak to me if they should ever see or hear something online that concerns them.
- I have highlighted to my child that strangers can pop up anywhere on the Internet including: email, instant messengers, social networking sites and online games. I have explained stranger remains a stranger even if you feel you have spoken to them enough to know them.
- I have demonstrated to my child how to report abuse on the websites and applications they use.
- I know where to go for help if I am concerned about my child using the Internet or digital devices.

