Briefing for schools

Online safety best practice

December 2017

School is a good place to teach children and young people about the risks that are present online and how to stay safe online.

The use of technologies can support and enhance learning, but pupils need to be taught:

- how to use them in a safe and responsible way
- how to behave appropriately online
- what to do if they are worried about something they see online or something that is sent to them electronically.

School ethos, policy and training

Schools are expected to have online safety policies and procedures that are read and understood by all staff and volunteers. These should be reviewed regularly due to nature of how quickly technology changes and evolves.

Schools must ensure they have web filtering systems in place to ensure children cannot access inappropriate material.

In addition to an online safety policy, schools should also have an acceptable use policy which should cover:

- the correct use of technologies
- the sanctions if technologies are misused
- how incidents of misuse will be logged.

All teaching and non-teaching staff should receive training about online safety and be able to recognise and respond to online safety issues.

Schools should create an environment where children feel confident to tell any member of staff if they have seen or received anything that has made them feel uncomfortable or threatened.

Schools should promote helplines and other sources of information around the building so children know where to go to get help if they do not feel able to talk to a

member of the school staff. The school could also have signposts for sources of advice for teachers in the staff room.

Responding to online safety issues

If a young person discloses online or technology assisted abuse it should be reported to the school's designated safeguarding lead. They will then need as much information as possible about the incident before they can decide on the next course of action. This could include:

- **content**: has the child been exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material. This includes online pornography, violence and hate sites, substance abuse, websites that are pro anorexia/self-harm/suicide

- **contact**: has the child been subjected to harmful online interaction with other users. This includes grooming, cyber bullying and identity theft, including Facebook profiles, and sharing of passwords

- **conduct**: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm. This covers the disclosure of personal information, health and wellbeing, sexting and copyright issues.

The NSPCC has produced a flowchart, What to do if a pupil or a teacher reports an e-safety incident (PDF), which provides guidance on how to deal with various types of e-safety incidents.

Preventing online safety issues

Online safety should be embedded in the school curriculum through IT/ computing lessons and PHSE and RSE lessons and assemblies so young people can be educated on the risks of the online world and encouraged to use technology safely. The NSPCC has produced Share Aware lesson plans and teaching resources for schools to help teach children to keep themselves safe online.

Parents also play a big part in keeping their children safe online so need to be aware of existing and emerging technologies their children are potentially using. NSPCC Net Aware is a useful guide for parents on the types of social media their children might be using and their levels of safety.

The NSPCC and O2 deliver online safety workshops for parents, to primary schools across the UK. Schools can contact schools@nspcc.org.uk to book a workshop.

Online behaviour of school staff

Staff in schools need to maintain a professional code of conduct in their own use of technology and online behaviour. This includes:

- keeping personal information private
- considering the long term implications of content posted online
- not engaging with pupils on social networking sites or through mobile devices
- not uploading or posting inappropriate offensive or illegal content on any space or site
- adhering to website conditions of use including any age restrictions.

Useful links

Keeping Children Safe in Education

Hwb – Online safety for schools

Guidance on Developing Policies to promote the Safe and Responsible Use of Mobile Technology in Schools

Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide for Schools

Online training for schools

- Child protection in schools
- Keeping children safe online
- Safer recruitment in education
- Managing sexualised behaviour in primary schools

Contact the NSPCC's Knowledge and Information Service with any questions about child protection or related topics:

Tel: 0808 800 5000 | Email: help@nspcc.org.uk | Twitter: @NSPCCpro