HATTON ACADEMIES TRUST

Safer Internet Use

Tips for encouraging open discussion about digital life

Make your interest clear

Ask to see your child's favourite games and apps which will help you spot issues

Be open, honest, and appropriate to their age

When answering questions about puberty, relationships, etc.

Remind your child they can always talk to you

Even when they view harmful content, talking about it openly will help

Discuss that not everything we see online is real

Use examples from your own online world, like posts that show perfect houses

Try to remain calm

Your initial reaction could stop a child from speaking openly about what they've seen

Create a family agreement

About device use including when to use devices, parental controls and why it's good to talk

Keep talking

Children's Views on Online Safety

The Children's Commissioner for England has just published a guide for parents written with the support of, and using the voices of, teenagers. It is easy for us to decide what the harms are and what might help our children to stay safe online but it is especially powerful to hear this from the children themselves. This newsletter reports on some of the key themes from the report but if you are interested the entire report can be found here.

CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

Which apps do children report that they use the most online?

Social Media

Tiktok – age limit 13+ or 18+
Instagram – age limit 16+
Snapchat – age limit 13+
X (formerly Twitter) – age limit 13+
YouTube – age limit 13+ or 16+
Twitch – age limit 13+
Reddit – age limit 13+
Quora – age limit 13+
Pinterest – age limit 13+

AI Platforms

ChatGPT – age limit 13+
Microsoft Co-Pilot – age limit 13+
Snapchat's My AI – age limit 13+
Gauth – age limit 13+
Google Gemini – age limit for premium is 18+
Character AI – age limit 13+
Viggle AI – parental consent needed
Sora - age limit 13+ or 18+

Other Popular Apps

Roblox – gaming site. No minimum age limit.

Age Limits

As stated above nearly all of these platforms have an age limit of at least 13+ and many require parental consent for a child to set up an account (though children can easily bypass this). Certain features such as livestreaming have higher age limits such as 16+ or 18+.

Audit your child's apps regularly to see what they are using.

Staying safe online
Advice to share with your
child

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**Tell a trusted adult if
something upsets you**

**Take breaks from
being online**

**Don't chat with
strangers**

**Ask permission before
downloading anything**

**Avoid sharing private
photos**

**Don't give away
personal information**

**Double check your
news sources**

**Take notice of age
restrictions**

Stick to trusted apps

**Be suspicious of new
information**

**Show respect to
others**

**Be honest with
parents and carers**

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When Bad Things Happen:

**Children report that the kinds of things they face online would shock their
parents and that they rarely discuss these. These include being contacted
by strangers, viewing pornography, being offered things to buy, receiving
intimate images of peers, cyberbullying, and content promoting self-harm
and suicide.**

What do children say about this?

We wouldn't tell parents
Children report that they are
concerned about how their
parents will react thinking that
their parents wouldn't stay calm,
wouldn't understand, or would
just confiscate their phone
rather than supporting them
through it. This is why we always
recommend frequent open,
honest conversations with
children from a young age about
online safety use and staying
calm when your child reports
concerns to you.

**What are children most
worried about?**
Cyberbullying tops the list of
worries, as does content that
glamorizes or encourages self-
harm and suicide.

Connecting with strangers
A quote from one child states that
"[people are] friendly and they
kind of ask random things out of
nowhere. Maybe what you look
like or your address". This
suggests that we should talk to
children about risks such as
grooming and identity fraud.

Conversation starters that children were happy with:

- "What did you see on Snapchat today?"
- "I saw something strange online today and thought I would check-
  in to see how you are feeling when online?"
- "Can you show me how to use Instagram?"
- "What worries you about me being online? What do you think
  might worry me about you being online?"

Starting a conversation about life online

Be positive and open-minded about the internet

Talk early and often
Make conversations about the internet part of your daily routine

Create a safe space for conversations
Talking face to face can sometimes be difficult, so talking while walking alongside or while in a car might be easier. Make sure there are no distractions

Keep it relevant
The way your child uses the internet will change as they grow older. So, ask open-ended questions to let your child lead the conversations you have to get a feel of the challenges and experiences they face online

Be proactive
Create an agreement together on how the internet will be used, including time spend online, who your child can communicate with, appropriate apps and games and safety tools to report and block harmful content

How should I support my child?

Children report that 69% of 8–15-year-olds are online 2h+ per day; and 23% of them are online for 4h+ per day! Some recognize that they are showing signs of addiction and most felt that they would be ok with rules on screen-time if they were negotiated with parents and the reasons explained.

Rules seen as reasonable by the teenagers involved in the survey include:
-No phones at the meal table
-No phones in bedrooms/after bedtime
-Set aside phone-free time for the whole family
For all of these rules; children will be more likely to agree to them if they are family-wide rules i.e. adults follow them as well!

How to respond to incidents/concerns: what the children agreed with:

- Children will try to bypass parental controls so don't be angry when this has happened. Promote regular conversations around why controls are in place and negotiate an appropriate level of freedom depending on the age of your child.
- Confiscating your child's phone does not need to be the default approach. This actually reduces your child's safety as they are less likely to report concerns to you.
- Know how and when to report concerns and show your child how to do so when concerns are raised e.g. grooming should be reported to CEOP, bullying to the NSPCC, nude image sharing to Childline, child abuse images to IWF, and social media concerns to the relevant social media company's reporting tool.
- A family activity pack can be found here with a range of tools and activities to use with your child from primary to secondary age that helps you to start conversations, come up with agreements, and ensure that your child is clear on how to keep themselves safe online. Again the activity pack has been produced by the Children's Commissioner for England based on the survey.