ONLINE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

Providing online safety information for professionals

In this issue:

- **Engaging parents in online safety**
- **Anti-bullying research**
- **Relationship & Anti-bullying Resources**
- **Mobile phone policies**
- **Keeping children safe online**

Get this newsletter sent to your inbox
https://bit.ly/2HtTNHf

Engaging parents in online safety

Schools are trying to educate young people about how to use the internet safely and also how to be resilient. Much of young people's activity online and many of the issues that young people experience will happen outside school, so it is important that parents are aware of the issues, are helping young people to make good choices, are able to use parental controls where appropriate and are working with schools to educate young people. However, many professionals will be aware that engaging parents in online safety can be very tricky.

Many parents seem unaware of the risks and issues that can be caused by excessive or inappropriate internet use. In addition to safety issues, such as bullying, grooming and youth produced sexual imagery, research from Ofcom has shown that 70% of 12-15 year olds take their mobile phones to bed and in some cases watch content to help them fall asleep. This means there is no break for a young person who is being bullied online, and there is evidence that some young people are up all night viewing and sharing material when they should be asleep, which may affect their ability to study the next day.

One potential strategy that might benefit young people is if all the parents in a year group agree a cut-off time for technology in the evening so that young people do not worry they are missing out and know that everyone else is off-line.

Many schools will have tried to deliver a parents' online safety session to find that the few parents that attend are not the parents that they were hoping to engage. A combination of engagement strategies is often the most effective. Here are some ideas….

1. Develop relationships with your parents and don't be afraid to use hot beverages and biscuits to do this. If parents feel part of the school community, a conversation about online safety is less likely to seem like a criticism of their parenting and more like collaborative behaviour. Can you engage some parents at school drop off or pick up times, or at transition or parents' evenings?

2. Know your parents. Accommodate both working and at-home parents with the timings of sessions. Some schools find that sessions at school drop off or pick up time work best.

3. Provide childcare. Provide an activity for children eg bedtime stories, discos or just after school supervision at the time of the session.

4. Make sessions more relevant by involving children and parents in planning. Ask the children what they are doing online, what concerns them and what they need from their parents. You are then telling parents about what *their* children need rather than someone else's children. Use local expertise eg PTA, parent governors and knowledgeable parents to help engage parents. You may also be able to survey children and/or parents and use the answers to focus your input.

5. Get your branding right. A talk entitled Online Safety may seem scary or boring. Try and be more inventive. *"Do you know your Emotes from your Vbux?"* Or perhaps use hashtags or other gaming or social media terms. Find out who the young people are watching on Youtube and use their pictures and a caption such as *"Do you know who these people are? Your children do."* You probably want to choose something that provokes an emotional response rather than just facts. Related to this, make your adverts interesting – use logos of apps that the children and parents will recognise.

7. Pounce on parents at times when they are already in school. If you want to talk about specific issues, a quick 5 min session during the transition evening or other existing activity can be used to highlight concerns about a particular app, game or behaviour, or to explain how school deals with online bullying or youth produced sexual imagery. For younger children, if you have assemblies that parents already attend, this could be a good forum. For older children, online safety could be included in a wider-reaching session covering mental health and well-being, exams, and how to support your child at school.

8. Use a variety of engagement channels. Information can also be sent out by parent mail, newsletters or placed on the school website or social media. If children are involved in creating the content then parents are more likely to look at it. If you have a school quiz, put some online questions into that or set homework that requires parents to get involved and ask questions of their own children. Good luck!

Anti-bullying Research

A poll of 11-16 years olds carried out by the Anti-Bullying Alliance for Anti-Bullying Week has identified that many children and young people are seeing adults treat each other with a lack of respect or even bullying each other.

The research showed that 45% children have been bullied face to face in the last six months and 34% online, which is the equivalent to one child in each class being bullied every day.

Nearly 90% of children had seen someone else being bullied. One of the themes from the educational materials from Anti-Bullying week and the #StopSpeakSupport campaign are transforming bystanders to upstanders.

Relationship Resources

The NSPCC have worked with the PSHE Association to create free lesson plans on the topic of *Making Sense of Relationships*. These are suitable for children aged 10-16 and cover a number of topics but include online safety, online friendships and sharing sexual images.

Another resource, *It's Not OK* helps children and young people recognise concerning behaviour and identify characteristics of positive relationships. The lesson plans, films and accompanying activities cover what behaviour to look out for and how to respond to it.
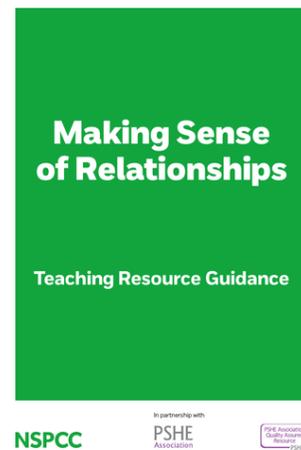
Anti-bullying Resources

Be Strong Online is a peer-led programme for 11-18 year olds, developed by the Diana Award and Vodafone, to help young people develop digital resilience.

There are 10 modules including cyberbullying, social media, online privacy, selfies and gaming to train peer ambassadors. The resources also include plans for 20 min sessions for the ambassadors to lead.

Mobile phone policies

The Children's Commissioner Anne Longfield has encouraged schools to be "brave and bold" and to show leadership in relation to school mobile phone policies. She has noted that all schools have different policies about the bringing in and use of mobile phones – some ban all phones, some ban smartphones, some allow smartphones at school but they cannot to be used, some allow use of smartphones in school and some use smartphones in lessons. Ms Longfield is urging schools to consider the benefits for pupils and staff where pupils are not allowed to have phones in school. These benefits include being without the pressures of having to respond to messages during school time and allowing students to concentrate more on their education. You may also wish to consider whether there might be less pressure on parents to buy smartphones for younger children if they are not allowed in school.

The Education Minister Nick Gibb has also suggested that policies controlling mobile phone use in schools need to be reassessed. In our work with children and young people, we see the incidents of online bullying and unpleasantness increase massively once they have smartphones.

Keeping Children Safe Online

The NSPCC has updated their 4 hour online *Keeping children safe online* course. This is priced at £30, is CPD certified. At the end of the course participants will:

- understand which technologies, games, websites and apps children and young people use and why
- understand the risks and issues associated with children and young people being online
- know how to access advice and support to be able to better protect children and support parents to help keep children safer online.

Topics covered include: harmful online content; sharing and sexting; sexual offending against children online; and bullying online.

The course is for anyone who works with children and young people.

https://bit.ly/2wEq3TW