Social Media and Young People

Information for Parents

The internet offers lots of opportunities and benefits for children and young people providing a place to learn and share. It can also pose a number of risks. It's normal for children to take risks – it's part of their natural development. But when children takes risks online they may see content that's not suitable for their age, whether this is accidental or because they're curious. They may also share more than they realise and be targeted by bullies or abusers.

Parents of children in Year 6 will have received a letter this week informing them that some pupils have been using social media to share unkind and abusive comments about their peers. The whole year group has been reminded that the latest legislation views this as a criminal offence. Our e-safety focus for this term is to further inform and advise children about the appropriate use of social media.

The following information aims to inform you and help you support your child in their use of the internet.

Online Abuse Facts and Statistics (from NSPCC)

We don't know how many children and young people are affected by online abuse. Children often:

- don't tell anyone because they feel ashamed or guilty
- may not know who to tell
- may not realise they are being abused.

> 1 in 4 children have experienced something upsetting on a social networking site.

> One in five 8 to 11 year olds and seven in ten 12 to 15 year olds has a social media profile.

> There were 7,296 counselling sessions with young people who talked to ChildLine about online bullying and safety last year.

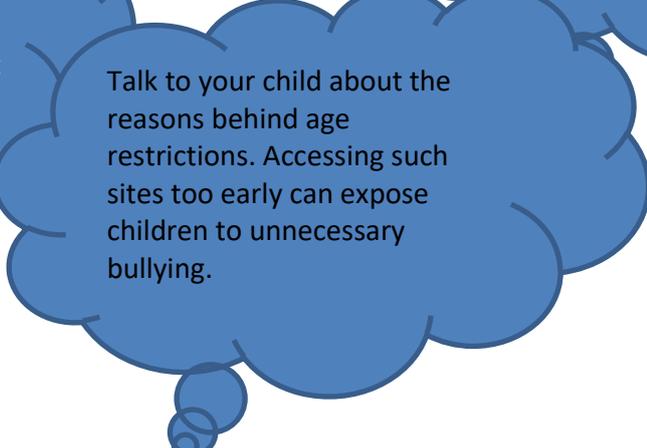> 1 in 3 children have been a victim of cyberbullying.

Advice for Parents/Carers

- Much of young people's lives are online – this can create a false sense of security. It can be easier to say and reveal things that wouldn't be said face to face; be cruel, aggressive or flirtatious.
- There are offline consequences to online behaviour.
- Comments intended to be funny can often be misinterpreted online.
- Social networking can increase existing social pressures and reinforce a sense of isolation; for instance by people purposefully not liking a young person's status update or photo or by excluding them from group chats.

What can you do?
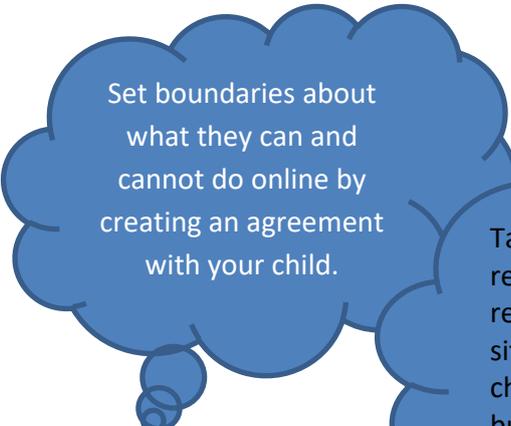
Set boundaries about what they can and cannot do online by creating an agreement with your child.

Use the privacy settings, parental controls and built in internet safety features provided by the major internet service providers.

Talk to your child about the reasons behind age restrictions. Accessing such sites too early can expose children to unnecessary bullying.
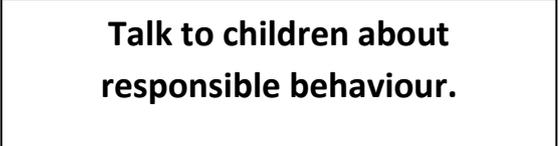
Talk to children about responsible behaviour.

Where to go for Advice

Thinkuknow provides helpful tips on agreeing and setting boundaries

For parents and carers experiencing any internet safety issues with their children, The Parent Zone provides a national helpline service at - help@theparentzone.co.uk

Childnet gives more detailed information about talking to your child.

Antibullyingpro provides practical advice for parents.

Your guide to the social networks your kids use: https://www.net-aware.org.uk/

The UK Safer Internet Centre has guides for parental controls