



Online Safety at Home

Spring Term 2026

Keeping Children Safe Online: Finding the Right Balance

Protecting children from online strangers and the risks of exploitation, grooming, and bullying is a priority for every parent. The most effective safeguard would be to prevent children from interacting with others online altogether.

However, as our children grow older — especially those with special educational needs — online communication can feel like a vital connection to the world. It can offer friendship, community, and a sense of belonging that may be harder to access offline.

The challenge isn't simply shutting the door on online interaction, but learning how to open it safely, thoughtfully, and with the right support in place.

Keeping Children Safe Online: Protecting Them Without Cutting Them Off

What children need most is guidance, not isolation

Instead of removing online interaction entirely, we need to teach children **how to navigate it safely**. This approach builds confidence, resilience, and independence — skills they'll need throughout their lives.

Here are some practical ways families can support safer online experiences:

Stay involved in their digital world

Children are far safer when adults show interest in what they're doing online. Ask about the games they play, the people they talk to, and the apps they enjoy. Curiosity builds trust.

Set clear, consistent boundaries

Rules around screen time, privacy settings, and who they can talk to online help create structure. These boundaries should be explained, not imposed — children respond better when they understand the “why”.

Keep communication open

Make sure children know they can come to you if something feels wrong, confusing, or upsetting. The goal is to be their first port of call, not their last resort.

Tailor support for children with SEN

Some young people may rely heavily on online spaces for social connection. For them, removing access can feel isolating or distressing. Instead, offer extra guidance, practise online scenarios together, and check in regularly about how they're feeling.

Use safety tools wisely

Parental controls, privacy settings, and reporting tools can help — but they work best alongside conversation and supervision, not instead of them.

A Shared Responsibility

Keeping children safe online is about empowerment. When adults stay engaged, set boundaries, and build trust, children learn to recognise risks and make safer choices.

What are parental controls?

The online world gives us access to a huge amount of information and services, but the scale of information available also means that there is content that is inappropriate for children.

Parental controls allow you to block and filter upsetting or inappropriate content. They work across your WiFi, phone network, individual apps and devices.



Parental controls can help you to:

- plan what time of day your child can go online and how long for
- create content filters to block apps that may have inappropriate content
- manage the content different family members can see.

Setting up parental controls

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/>

Go to the NSPCC website and find out how to set up parental controls on:

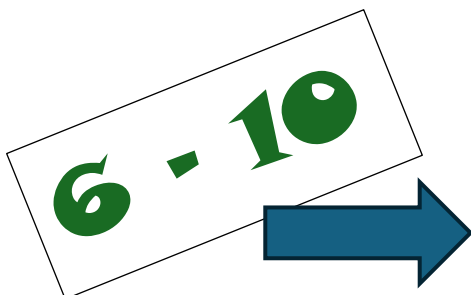
Games consoles
Apps, tablets and computers

Mobiles, tablets and computers
WiFi and being away from home

Whilst parental controls are a helpful tool there are limitations.

So they shouldn't be seen as a whole solution. Even if you've put things in place on your home broadband and your child's device, they won't help if your child connects to a different WiFi with no controls in place.

- Explain to your child why you are setting parental controls; to keep them safe. But also let them know that they can talk to you to discuss why certain settings are in place.
- Set good, strong passwords where you are able. On some parental controls you can set a password which prevents settings and features from being changed.
- Age, cognitive ability and emotional maturity is a significant factor; as children get older, restrictions and controls you use will change, but only at a pace that is appropriate for your child, not pressure from your child "because everyone else is allowed".
- Content filters are never 100% effective, it is likely at some point that your child will see inappropriate or upsetting content and it is important that you are able to talk to them about this.



Online safety for young children aged 6-10

Early use of digital technology can boost language skills, social development, and creativity in children. But it also carries the risk of exposure to online harm. See how you can help your child stay safe and happy.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/6-10/>



Have a conversation with your child – it's the best way to keep them safe.

It is really important to chat with your children on an ongoing basis about staying safe online. Not sure where to begin? These conversation starter suggestions can help.

- ✓ **Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.**
- ✓ What games do you and your friends like to play online? Can you show me the websites you visit the most? Shall we play your favourite game online together?
- ✓ **Ask them about how they stay safe online.**
- ✓ What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?
- ✓ **Ask them if they know where to go for help.**
- ✓ Where can they go to find the safety advice, privacy settings and how to report or block on the services they use?
- ✓ **Think about how you each use the internet.**
- ✓ What more could you do to use the internet together? Are there activities that you could enjoy as a family?

Protect children from online grooming

Online grooming can be a difficult issue to tackle with children but there are practical tips and tools you can use to help them recognise when they are at risk and take action.

With the growth of social media platforms, online games and instant messaging apps, children are able to talk to anyone – friends or strangers – from around the world within minutes. This can benefit many by making them feel less isolated but for some, it can leave them vulnerable to grooming.

Internet Matters, Org know that online 'stranger danger' is a concern, particularly for younger children. The key thing to remember is that equipping children with the right advice to make smarter choices online can minimise the risks of exposure to online grooming.

The best way to deal with grooming is to prevent it from happening by making sure your child is well-informed, uses privacy settings on social media sites and knows that they can talk to you if they feel unsafe or worried.

**internet
matters.org**

Take a look at the great resources and videos for parents created by internet matters.org.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/online-grooming/>

Meath Digital Defenders



We have a team of pupil Digital Defenders in school who have MISSIONS (ways of making sure children are safe online):

- the missions are shared with the whole school in assembly
- the missions are taken back to their classrooms
- Our Digital Defenders remind their classmates of the mission when they are using laptops or tablets in school, talking about the internet and what they do at home

To help our children understand how to look after laptops, tablets etc the team are putting together class charters for looking after their new laptops in school and an agreement for each pupil to sign.

Their missions this term have been:



NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>



<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>

Where can you look for further information or help?



<https://www.internetmatters.org/>



<https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/>

You can click this button on our 'For Families' page on the school website to contact or report to CEOP



You can contact the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) if you are concerned about online abuse or exploitation of children:

- You are worried that your child has been sexually abused online
- You are concerned about how someone has been communicating with your child online
- You are experiencing online sexual abuse
- You are worried that someone you know is experiencing online sexual abuse

CEOP can help with:

- Identifying the person or people responsible for a crime
- Making the child safe
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If you think a child is in immediate danger, you should call the police on 999