



9<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Dear Parents/Carers,

## Media Devices

Oswald Road has a firm policy on the use of electronic devices at school, but it has become clear in recent weeks that the management of media and technology at home can be a difficult issue for parents, carers and children. In Year 6 children will often begin to socialise more independently and want to stay in contact with one another – particularly during holiday periods. It may be a time when children are introduced to text messaging, Facebook, email and chat rooms by older siblings and/or friends. This is the reality of the world we live in, but we should be aware of some of the potential problems that these technologies can bring.

In Year 6 electronic social networking tends to become even more central to the social dynamic of the class. Children of this age group will be tempted to use Facebook to organise their social life. This comes with its own set of problems and issues. Some devices such as iPod Touch/ iPhones and game playing devices like Nintendos are particularly insidious: primarily designed for a specific purpose – storing and accessing music/ making phone calls/ playing games. These devices have cameras and/or screens and can provide easy access to the internet via Wi-Fi etc. While many families have good filters on home computers to protect children from inappropriate content this protection is not always carried over to other devices. Phones and iPods may have some filtering available but parents must ensure they actively set up filtering on each device provided to a child.

From recent research we know the main technology related issues of concern facing parents of children are as follows:

- Access to inappropriate and confronting content online and via media – and capacity to send this content on to others;
- Access to networking sites which may allow opportunities for inappropriate relationships to form between the child and unknown adults or older children. Potential for harmful and abusive situations such as 'grooming' and 'sexting';
- Capacity for children to become involved with cyber-bullying – either as a victim or a perpetrator.

We have had a few incidents over the past few weeks where children have been sending unkind text messages outside of school to each other, prank calling each other and accessing inappropriate content and language in the 'virtual gaming world'. We address some of these issues within our e-safety curriculum and PSHE lessons, but we would urge you to also take the appropriate steps to safeguard your children.



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Below are some ideas and points to consider. If you would like further information or support please contact myself or Lisa Cameron, our Children & Families Support Coordinator.

## WHAT CAN WE DO TO SAFEGUARD OUR CHILDREN?

The answer to this question will vary widely according to the ages, temperaments and circumstances of our children, but some suggestions are:

- Think twice about giving your child a mobile phone and if you must, keep it as simple as possible and preferably without a camera.
- Think twice about giving your child a sophisticated iPod device. If your child must have an iPod, consider a simpler device like an iPod Shuffle (which is music only).
- Talk to your children about their use of computer and phone technology and ensure they understand the serious implications of inappropriate behaviour.
- Talk to your children about sharing personal information online. Ensure they check with you first before signing up for or joining anything online.
- Monitor their use of phone/iPod and internet technology
- Don't allow computers or any device with a screen in bedrooms or other areas where they can be used in an unsupervised environment.
- Install filtering software to restrict access to inappropriate websites and ensure filters exist on all devices that children have access to.
- Prioritise the safety of your children over their privacy while they are at a vulnerable age
- Prioritise the safety of your children over their entertainment. Children travelling on bus journeys can read to pass the time.
- Look at the rating - despite inconsistencies, this is generally a useful guide on the appropriateness of the movie, game, etc.
- Know before you go - [www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org) is a useful website that provides commentary about the content of specific movies, TV shows & games, as well as many other useful links to information.
- Limit amount of viewing as it impacts on children's thought patterns.
- Ask your children what they already connect to online: do they have an email address, Facebook account, avatar etc.? You may be surprised at the answers, especially if they have older siblings.
- Try to support other families in dealing with these issues. Communicate clearly with parents of other children about what boundaries you are trying to maintain for your child and respect the boundaries of others. Remember that families with older children may have a more open internet/media environment



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than you want for your younger child. If this is a concern to you, discuss putting certain mutually acceptable parameters in place during visits.

There are many very useful websites for parents, providing specialist assistance in these areas. Links for some of them are:

- [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)
- [www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org)
- [www.getsafeonline.org/safeguarding-children/safeguarding-children/](http://www.getsafeonline.org/safeguarding-children/safeguarding-children/)
- [www.parentsprotect.co.uk/internet\\_safety.htm](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/internet_safety.htm)
- [www.internetsafety.com/internet-safety-tips-for-parents.php](http://www.internetsafety.com/internet-safety-tips-for-parents.php)
- [www.bewebaware.ca/english/cyberbullying.html](http://www.bewebaware.ca/english/cyberbullying.html)
- [www.mediawise.org.uk](http://www.mediawise.org.uk)
- [www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)
- <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Kind regards,

Donna Wealleans  
Assistant Headteacher- Safeguarding and Pastoral Care



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