



Saint Thomas More Catholic Voluntary Academy

(part of the St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Academy Trust)

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Love one Another as I have Loved You
John 13:34

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Tuesday 5th February 2019

Safer Internet Day 2019

Dear Parents/Carers and Children,

At St. Thomas More CVA, we take the safety of our young people very seriously – both in the online and offline worlds. That said, it is not our responsibility to judge what the children do when they are online – that is a matter for parents and their children. However, it is our responsibility to educate the children in our care about how to stay safe when they are online.

Leading up to this year's Safer Internet Day, the Year 6 children decided that, in order to provide relevant advice, they needed to understand how our Key Stage 2 children engage with the online world. The decision was taken to design, create and run a survey based on an online questionnaire that would be open to all children in Years 3-6 to complete; participation was not compulsory and all data was gathered anonymously. When the survey was carried out last week, 94% of KS2 children took part. The results have been emailed out with this letter and the Year 6 children's own recommendations based on these results and what they learned at their recent visit to the Warning Zone are detailed below.

Please read the comments below in conjunction with the survey results and discuss them as a family. Consider how you can improve your e-Safety to make your online world a safer place to have fun, learn and explore.

Use of social media

Although the minimum age for having an account or profile on most social media sites is 13, there are many children in KS2 who have their own accounts, the number peaking in Year 6.

Advice from Year 6: be aware of minimum ages for things like WhatsApp, Instagram and Snapchat: they are there to protect you. If you have an account or profile for social media or a game and are under-age, make sure that an adult knows that you have that account. Give them your login details so that they can login should they need to. If you're unsure about anything, ask an adult that you trust.

Use of privacy settings

A reassuring number of children know where to find their privacy settings and can set them, especially in Years 5 and 6. However, in Years 3 and 4, about 40% of children either don't know how to set their privacy settings or don't understand what they are and what they do.

Advice from Year 6: keep yourself safe and your personal information private when you're online – to do this you need to set your privacy settings. Make sure you know where to find these privacy





settings, set them carefully and ask an adult that you trust to check them for you. This is something that you should ask an adult to check from time-to-time as privacy settings can change.

Contact with strangers online

Approximately 20% of children in Year 3, rising to just over 40% of young people in Year 6, do chat with people that they don't know when they're online. Additionally, around 14% of Year 3 children, rising to nearly 45% of Year 6s, have accepted a friend request from a stranger when they're online.

Advice from Year 6: don't chat to people who you don't know when you're online. No matter what they tell you, you don't know who they are, where they are, how old they are or why they want to be your friend. If you're unsure, ask an adult that you trust. Also, there are no prizes for having the greatest number of friends by accepting friend requests from total strangers – you are asking for trouble and putting yourself at risk.

Online activity without parental knowledge/approval

About 10% of Year 3 children and about 45% of young people in Year 6 play games online or use websites without their parents' knowledge. One quarter of Year 5s and approximately 35% of Year 6s play games and visit websites that they believe their parents would not approve of.

Advice from Year 6: be open and honest with your parents about your online activity – accept their advice about whether apps, websites, games etc. are suitable for you. If you do have a problem when you're online and you need help, and if you're doing things that your parents know about, then you won't worry about asking your parents for help. You'll have nothing to hide.

Posting content online without permission

Encouragingly, only a small minority of children in KS2 have posted information about, or a photo of, someone else online without their permission. However, 15% of Year 5s and just over one quarter of Year 6s have posted photos of themselves without their parents' permission.

Advice from Year 6: posting photos online can give away information about where you live (check what's in the background) or which school you go to if you're wearing your uniform. You also may not be able to control what happens to your photo once its online – someone else could share it without your permission or knowledge. So, be safe and don't do it.

Unkind comments online

Nearly 14% of Year 3s, rising to nearly 37% of Year 6s, have said something unkind to someone else whilst online. Conversely, about 17% of Year 3s and 58% of Year 6s have been on the receiving end of unkind comments online. Unfortunately, about half of these do not tell a trusted adult about their experience.

Advice from Year 6: don't make unkind comments online – once you've posted them, you can't take them back. Others could see what you've said, share them without your permission and you might find yourself in a great deal of trouble. On the other hand, if you receive unkind comments online, don't reply but always tell an adult that you trust IMMEDIATELY. Take a screenshot of the evidence and report it.

Online screen time

Between 14% and 28% of children in KS2 year groups spend over 3 hours online on a weekday during the school term. Additionally, nearly 20% of Year 3s, rising to just under 58% of Year 6s go back online after bedtime without their parents' knowledge.



Advice from Year 6: make time after school for all sorts of things like talking to your family, doing different sports or simply reading a book, as well, of course, as going online! It's better for your mind and your body if you do a mixture of things during your evenings rather than just sitting in front of a screen. If you go online after bedtime, using a screen in the dark could damage your eyesight and there is some evidence that it will mess up your sleep pattern leaving you tired, grumpy and a pain to be with.

Parental checks of your online activity

The majority of Key Stage 2 children have their online activity checked by their parents, at least to some extent. However, it is clear from the results of this survey that the KS2 children are doing things online that parents are unaware of.

Advice from Year 6: talk to your parents about what you do and what you would like to do online; ask them for their help to stay safe.

Providing false information online

20% of Year 3s, rising to nearly 60% of Year 6s have made up information about themselves when online. Motives for doing so vary.

Advice from Year 6: bear in mind that lying about your age could mean that you are shown on-screen material, adverts etc. that are not appropriate for your age. Talk to your parents about the best thing to do if an app, website or game needs to know your age – don't decide on your own. Also, don't give your real name online unless an adult that you trust says it is safe to do so.

Inappropriate content online

Just over 27% of Year 3s, rising to 47% of Year 6s, have seen content that shocked them or made them feel uncomfortable when they were online.

Advice from Year 6: if you see or hear something online that worries, scares or shocks you, tell an adult that you trust IMMEDIATELY. Report it too. Remember – if you stumble across something inappropriate when you're online, it's not your fault – so don't be afraid to get help.

Thank you for reading this and thank you to everyone in Years 3-6 for their honest replies to the questionnaire.

The following have also been emailed out with this letter and the survey results:

- an Internet Safety Plan template for your family
- a list of Information and Online Resources that offer valuable advice for parents/carers

Further information is linked from the e-Safety page on the school website and also at these links:

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

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

All of us in Year 6 hope you have found this information very useful. Please take appropriate steps to improve your safety and therefore your enjoyment of the online world.

Safe surfing and gaming!

Mr. M. Rowlinson and the Year 6 Class