

## How safe are your children and grandchildren online?

As a school governor, I recently attended an online safety course, and thought I'd share some advice we were given.

Like it or not, we live in a digital age, and today's children and teens have never known a world without smartphones, tablets, online gaming and social media. Children and young people are naturally inquisitive, learn quickly and are easily distracted by content that is designed to keep your attention. They are also inclined to be trusting, lack enough knowledge to distinguish truth from deception, and are willing to ignore potential risks, or take them anyway.

As in other aspects of life, children and young people need our guidance and help to keep themselves safe. Many adults either feel inadequate to give this, or underestimate the dangers of giving devices to children, and are ignorant about the content of games. But simple steps can minimise risks and enable children to use devices more safely – such as making sure you've set the privacy settings and parental controls on the child's device or the app. they are using, and on your home wifi/broadband (your ISP will be able to tell you how). You can find out about all of this at [www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers).



Taking these preventative measures is very important, but even more important is talking with your child and establishing a relationship of trust with regard to devices, so that they tell you about any troubling content they come across, or about cyber-bullying or just feeling unhappy about themselves. There are healthy and unhealthy ways of using technology, and open and honest conversations can help to reduce conflict with children about their use of devices. And as adults we need to model a healthy relationship to technology – how many times per day do *you* check your phone?

Never be afraid or ashamed to ask for help or advice, e.g. from your child's school or our Family Worker, Angela Harper. And take the trouble to get ahead of your (grand)children by using the website above and the links found on it.

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