



# Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School

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Headteacher - Mrs N Gregan

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This week we have focused in school on Online Safety and Children's Mental Health. A week when we have paused and reflected on our online behaviour, the choices that we are making and how safe we all are when using technology online. There is a vast number of benefits to technology; I certainly would not be able to do my job without it or communicate with my friends in different parts of the world. However, the development of technology is moving at an alarming rate and it is our responsibility as both parents and educators to ensure that our young people have all of the tools required to ensure that they remain as safe as possible when online. Whilst watching the BBC live lesson, we learnt about the use of AI and how it is now common in so many aspects of our lives. Ultimately, we are preparing our children live in a technological world; a world in which we need to have some understanding of.

For us in school, online safety is our biggest safeguarding concern. There are more and more incidents of inappropriate behaviour and language happening online or as a result of hearing things online; we are then having to address this and problem-solve alongside the children. The impact of these incidents on the relationships that the children are trying to navigate is in some cases irreparable. There are number of ways that we discuss and tackle online safety in school:

- KIDSAFE - at the start of each year in the Autumn term, the children all receive a series of Kidsafe lessons which will focus on online safety.
- Through computing lessons - children are encouraged to think about their online behaviour whenever they use technology in class.
- Specific online safety objectives linked to their age of development.
- As part of class and school council.

Instead of holding National Online Safety Day on just one day, we decided to spread it over the week to encourage a deeper conversation within each class. It has tied in beautifully with Children's Mental Health week as we know there is a clear link between the two. A key feature of the discussion across the school has been age ratings for specific apps and games that we know the children are playing. For example, the current age requirement for Whatsapp is 16 years +, yet this is the app that I found myself dealing with more than any other and the fall out from it; group chats have become the normal way for the children to interact. To have an X Box Live account, the children must be 13+.

As we have unpicked this with our children during the week, can I please ask you to reflect on your online behaviours and habits at home. School and home always work so closely together; therefore it is always difficult to tackle incidents involving apps that are not age appropriate in school, when they are being supported at home, despite the clear age range guidance.

**“You are precious in my eyes,” Isaiah 43:4**



**WhatsApp Age Rating**  
16+



**Fortnite Age Rating**  
12+



**Instagram Age Rating**  
13+



**TikTok Age Rating**  
13+



**X Box Live Account** 13+



Common Sense Media has a page all about apps and games that your children may be using. They will keep you up to date and answer your questions on the latest platforms and trends.



**common sense media**

Keeping young people safe online can seem like a daunting task but having a conversation about ways to keep safe is a great start. No one is an expert in the internet as it is moving at such a fast pace, but sitting down and making a family agreement with children at home is a great start.

Below are also some useful tips on how you can keep your children safe online.

- ◇ Set fair and consistent rules in relation to your child's internet use at home. As they get older, try to agree the rules with them so that they have some control over their digital world.
- ◇ Teach your child to think critically about what they see, read or hear online. As they get older they need to be able to assess for themselves whether they are in a risky online place and whether the information they are receiving is reliable and helpful to them.
- ◇ Maintain a positive outlook on your child's use of the internet. Share with them the great things that the internet can bring. Encourage an open dialogue so that your children know they can speak to you when something might happen.
- ◇ Children who can recover from an online mistake can learn and avoid making the same mistake again. You can help by making it easy for them to talk to you about their mishaps. Try and keep calm in each situation.

There are 4D's that you can implement:

- ◇ **DIGITAL** free zones - where is your technology located? Where can it not be used?
- ◇ **DIGITAL** role models - adults to lead by example online and with digital usage.
- ◇ **DIGITAL** sunset - we all need a cut off time. We all need to come away from technology to get a good night sleep.
- ◇ **DIGITAL** detox - How can you step away from technology completely? What could you do with the time instead?

As a school, we are always here to listen to any concerns.

Kind regards

Mrs N Gregan

**"You are precious in my eyes," Isaiah 43:4**