

## **Keeping safe online**

During this period of isolation, it is inevitable that we will all use social media a lot more as a way not only of communicating with family and friends but also to find out more, to gather information, to be entertained and to purchase items that we need.

Every day, as this virus progresses, we hear more and more about the wonderful things that people are doing to help and support their community showing us that there are a lot of very good people out there. Sadly however, just as this current state of affairs brings out the best in so many people, it presents others with even more opportunities to take advantage of children and adults in totally inappropriate and illegal ways. It is very important that every member of the family is cautious about how they use the internet and where they choose to get their information from as this current situation has provided less savoury members of society with greater opportunities for illegal behaviour from scams aimed at adults to grooming of children.

With this in mind, we just wanted to remind you to be very careful as to what sites you use, an increase of malicious emails (that probably look fine) and to inform you of the sort of scams that are going on. This will not be an exhaustive list as I am sure there will be daily reports of new abuses and criminal activity using the internet but we wanted to alert you to the main activities that are taking place and to remind you to be very careful in your use of the internet and to be suspicious of any unusual contact.

Please also remember that if you have decided to employ the services of an external tutor who will deliver lessons online, that they are reputable. Please check them out carefully.

We have produced 2 separate pages, both aimed at parents and carers, giving advice on keeping safe on line - one for adults and the other for children. Please click on the links to find out more.

**Online safety: how to protect yourselves**

**Online safety: how to help protect your children**

## Online safety: how to help protect your children

Below are some key points which we hope will help you to help your children stay safe online. In addition to the links below, there is also a lot of advice available to you on the [South West Grid for Learning](#) (SWGfL) site including their [top 10 online safety tips](#).

During school closures, children will inevitably spend a lot more time online on computers, mobiles and tablets. In many families, the children know far more about the different programs than their parents, as they often use them more and generally pick up new ideas very quickly and easily. So, rather than worrying too much about the amount of time they are spending online, as for many children this virtual contact with their peers will be a great comfort to them right now, it is far more important that you understand what it is they are doing and how you can help them to stay safe.

London Grid for Learning's (LGfL) DigiSafe team is publishing support for both pupils and for parents:

- A new **DigiSafe Daily** downloadable worksheet is available every day at [digisafedaily.lgfl.net](http://digisafedaily.lgfl.net) for parents or teachers of primary pupils to download and use at home.
- And for parents, they have published an A4 fridge-friendly [poster with top tips](#) for keeping your children safe online during corona virus closures.

In addition, here is some basic advice about the steps you can take with links to other sites that can offer you more detailed information and advice:

- **Talk to your children.** Sometimes it can be difficult to start this conversation with your children, especially when you think that they know more than you do! However, to have open and honest communication with them means that they will be more likely to come and talk to you about any problems they might encounter or at times of uncertainty. [The NSPCC](#) site has a wealth of resources, including guidance on [how to start a conversation with your child about online safety](#). Remember that if they are of school age, they should have already had such conversations with their teachers.
- **Check that the safety settings are turned on.** Whether your children are using the home internet, mobile devices, consoles, apps or games, there are lots of settings to make them safer. The key ones are: can they chat to strangers, can they video chat or 'go live', are there public posts? A site called [Internet Matters](#) has an incredible range of guides about age appropriate use (from pre-school children to secondary school children), parental controls, advice on cyberbullying, gaming and much more. You can also find guidance on setting parental controls on the [NSPCC site](#) mentioned above.
- **Get your children to show you their apps and games.** You don't need to be an expert on every app or game but if your child shows you what they are doing and with whom you'll probably be able to judge whether it's appropriate or not. Remember that 18 games are not more advanced – they are generally just more harmful. Several sites have

parents' guides to apps, together with recommendations such as: [Common Sense Media](#) and [NSPCC's NetAware](#).

- **Remind your children of key online safety principles** including how to be a good friend, to ask for help if they are worried or if someone is mean, not to get undressed on camera and most important of all .... If someone tells them not to tell or ask for help because it's too late or they will get into trouble – **THAT'S A LIE!**
- **Finally - if you aren't sure ASK US!** We will be to give you advice or help to fix something or will tell you who you need to talk to if we can't, so please contact us.

## Online safety: how to protect yourselves

As already mentioned, during this period of isolation, whilst we are all confined to our homes, the internet and social media will become even more important as a way of obtaining information, shopping and keeping in contact with the outside world.

Sadly, cyber criminals see this as yet another opportunity, by preying on the public's fear and interest, to create new scams targeting both individuals and organisations.

[The South West Grid for Learning \(SWGfL\)](#) has a lot of information on their site regarding the sort of scams that are being carried out and what you can do to protect yourselves. Please click on the link to find out more. Please take the time to read this as it has very sound basic advice to help you stay safe.

In brief, these are some of the things to look out for:

- **Online shopping:** since the outbreak of the corona virus over 16,000 new websites have been registered and it is thought likely that up to 50% are malicious in that they may be selling goods that don't exist, linked to malware sites and linked to 'phishing' campaigns. Please read the advice of the SWGfL's site to find out what you can do to protect yourselves and be very wary of sites that you have never heard of before claiming to have information, products and/or services that others don't, particularly those offering you protective face mask, hand sanitiser and other products in short supply.
- **Email scams:** Emails are being sent from sites that look reputable, for example:
  - one that claims to be from the World Health Organisation (WHO) containing a link to download 'safety measures'. This is one of many 'phishing' emails designed to capture your email address and password
  - the BBC have tracked 5 email scam campaigns including emails inviting you to 'click here for a cure to the corona virus, said to be written by a doctor who has developed a secret vaccine; UK Government Tax refund offers by email; emails advising you of safety measures you can take but with an attachment which is in fact malware, and several others, all of which are detailed on the SWGfL site.

**Remember** that if you receive an email from an unknown source which you did not ask for, either with advice, trying to sell you something or are asking for donations then do not open them. In particular, there are many setting themselves up to be the WHO. Also do not open any links or attachments that come with them.