



*In omnibus Fidelis*  
In all things faithful

ST. DAMIAN'S R.C. SCIENCE  
COLLEGE

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# Safer Social Networking



# SAFER SOCIAL NETWORKING

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Please find information in this booklet about:

1. Online Safety and support if needed
2. Support Networks
3. Talking to your child about staying safe online
4. Bullying online indicators
5. Mechanics of Safety
6. Gaming
7. Sexting
8. Important Information to be aware of

## ONLINE SAFETY AND SUPPORT IF NEEDED

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In this booklet there is helpful advice and tools you can use to help keep your child safe whenever and wherever they go online.

Children and young people spend a lot of time online – it can be a great way for them to socialise, explore and have fun. But children do also face risks like cyberbullying or seeing content that is inappropriate.

Whether you're unsure about what happens online or are up to speed with new technology. It's important that you talk to your child about staying safe.

It may feel daunting, but you don't need to be an expert on the internet. Understanding what children do online and the risks they face will help you to keep your child safe online.

When online, children and young people can learn new things, get help with homework, express themselves creatively and connect with friends and family.

There are also risks, but by understanding and talking about the dangers you can help keep your child safe online.

Children must be at least 13 years old to register on most social networking websites. But there's not a lot standing in the way of children joining at a younger age.

Age limits are there to keep children safe so you shouldn't feel pressurised into letting younger children join these websites.

# SUPPORT NETWORKS

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## **FACBOOK SAFETY CENTRE**

This provides helpful resources for users, parents, carers, teachers and law enforcement.

Services include: advice and instructions on how to reinforce privacy, how to block and report, support, educational resources and guidelines.

## **CYBERSMILE**

[www.cybersmile.org](http://www.cybersmile.org)

This is a children's specialist online bullying charity.

Services include: Outreach, counselling, helpline and workshops. It will also signpost other appropriate organisations if needed.

## **CHILDNET**

[www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)

This is a specialist online children's charity

Services include: training and resources for children, teachers and parents. It will also signpost other services and resources if needed.

## **CHILDLINE**

0800 1111

This is a confidential helpline for children.

Services include: direct immediate support via Childline counsellors. You can call, email or chat online.

## **CEOP**

[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre

This is part of the UK law enforcement community

Services include: Advice, help, ability to report on specific crimes involving sexual abuse or children; grooming, CSE and trafficking.

## **THINK U KNOW**

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

This is the CEOP education resource centre

Services include: Bespoke products for teachers, parents, children and young people

## **GET SAFE ONLINE**

[www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org)

This is a specialist online safety organisation.

Services include: access to information on all cyber related crime, risks and threats.

## **NSPCC**

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

This is a specialist online safety organisation.

National Society for the Protection of Cruelty towards Children.

Services include: Lots of helpful resources online – 'Net Aware', resource to report abuse to them.

## TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT STAYING SAFE ONLINE

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### **How to start the conversation with your child about staying safe online.**

*Talking to your child – openly and regularly – is the best way to help keep them safe online.*

Talk to your child about what you think is appropriate – but also involve them in the conversation. Ask what they think is OK for children of different ages – they'll feel involved in the decision-making.

*It is important to start talking to your child about keeping safe online at an early age.*

Be aware that your child might talk about friends who use apps or visit sites that you've decided aren't suitable. Be ready to discuss your reasons, but recognize that they may not agree with you. Listen carefully for the reasons why.

*It's easier to have conversations about online safety little and often,  
rather than trying to cover everything at once.*

Talk to them about online privacy and show them how to protect themselves:

- Where reporting functions are on the social media site
- How to block someone
- How to keep information private – ensuring your privacy settings are correct

Explain that you understand the internet is a great place to be and that you're just looking out for them. Tell them they should speak up and not keep secrets if something is worrying them.

*Ask your child to show you their favourite things to do online, and show an interest in what they do –  
just like you would offline.*

*This will give you a much better idea of what they're getting up to.  
And it gives you a way to support and encourage them while learning what they know.*

Reassure them that you're interested in all aspects of their life. Say that you'd like to talk about stuff they've seen online, sites and apps they visit, and that you'll share the things you've seen too. Recognise that they'll be using the internet to research homework, for example.

Talk to your child about what 'personal information' is when using a social media site. Such as email address, full name, phone number, address and school name – and why it's important to not share these.

Explain simple ways to protect privacy. For example, avoiding usernames like birthdates or locations that give away too much information.

Discuss images and photos, and what might be appropriate. Help your child understand how photographs can give people a sense of your personality, and that sharing the wrong kind of image can give the wrong impression.

Explain that it isn't easy to identify someone online. People aren't always who they say they are, so don't share personal information. If it's someone who genuinely knows your child, they shouldn't need to ask for personal information online.

Tell your child that if they're in doubt they should talk to you first.

### **Reassure them that you won't overreact – you're just looking out for them**

#### **...spending too much time online**

Agree what times your child can go online. For example, not going online just before bed time or in the morning before school.

Explain that you think it's important they do a variety of activities. You recognise that they enjoy being online, but you think it's important they do other things as well.

Discuss your family agreement and remind them why it's important. Use technical tools to help you reinforce online times. Many sites have timers that you can set, or you can set it up on the computer, mobile or tablet.

Make sure that you stick to what you've agreed and that you manage your own time online.

## **BULLYING: SOS**

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A child may show signs or behaviours that indicate that they are being bullied online or offline. These indicators can be subtle so parents, carers, family and friends need to be sensitive to the early signs and symptoms. The list below is not exhaustive and behaviour needs to be considered in context, so it should not automatically be assumed that a child displaying one or more of them is a victim of bullying. The following focuses on 3 areas – a child's attitude to SCHOOL, a professional's general OBSERVATIONS and things a child might SAY.

### **SCHOOL**

- Is frightened of walking to or from school or changes route
- Doesn't want to go on the school/public bus
- Refuses to go to school
- Suddenly starts asking to be driven to school
- Begins to truant
- Performance in school begins to drop
- Has dinner or other monies continually 'lost'
- Comes home hungry

### **OBSERVATIONS**

- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Becomes aggressive, abusive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Starts stammering
- Changes their usual routine
- Feels ill in the mornings
- Comes home with clothes torn, property damaged or 'missing'
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Starts to bully others
- Changes in eating habits
- Changes in child's attitude to accessing technology
- Afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Nervous or jumpy when a cyber-message is received

### **SAY**

- Threatens or attempts suicide/self-harm
- Threatens or attempts to run away
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Asks for money or start stealing money
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for their behavior

- **Cyberbullying** is an increasingly common form of bullying behavior which happens on social networks, games and mobile phones. Cyberbullying can include spreading rumours about someone, or posting nasty or embarrassing messages, images or videos. Cyberbullying includes:
  - Sending threatening or abusive text messages
  - Creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
  - 'trolling' - the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
  - Excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
  - Setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
  - Encouraging young people to 'self-harm'
  - Voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
  - Creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
  - Sending explicit messages, also known as 'sexting'
  - Pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations

**...if they are being bullied online:**

Reassure them that you can help to remove the content that's upsetting them and block the person who made the comments.

Look at the negative comments with them and contact the provider to get them removed.

Save the evidence by taking screen shots.

Contact their school to let them know about the incident, if you think it's appropriate.

**...if they are bullying others online:**

If your child has been bullying others online, find out whether other children were involved and what part your child played.

They may not have realised that what happened was bullying. Tell them explicitly that this behaviour isn't acceptable and the fact it's online doesn't mean it's not upsetting.

Help them understand how what they've done feels. You could ask them how they think the other child felt, or how they feel when someone says unkind things to them.

Explain that leaving someone out of an online discussion or group can be just as bad as attacking them directly. Encourage them to apologise to the person involved and help them to remove the content.

## MECHANICS OF SAFETY

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Most Internet Safety programmes deal with general awareness raising rather than providing children with the mechanics of how to block, report, set privacy and safety settings. Social media is here to stay whether you are on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ or any popular social networking site. Giving children the power to use their privacy and safety settings will enable them to protect themselves online.

### **READ THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

What limits do they set? Do they restrict age? Do they reinforce privacy measure and are they easy to understand? Do you know what you are agreeing to? READ THEM!

### **PRIVACY SETTINGS**

The settings on good social networking sites will be easy to understand and access. They will allow you to protect your privacy by allowing you to decide who sees what. If they don't, DON'T USE THE SITE – unless you are prepared for anyone to see what you say, where you are and what you are doing.

### **BLOCKING**

Good sites will have easy blocking mechanisms that allow you to stop someone following or engaging with you if you don't want them too. Blocking buttons should be easy to see and use.

### **MODERATION**

Good sites will provide some type of moderation. This might be human oversight or built in systems that identify abusive language and/or inappropriate content. Check whether your site is moderated. All children's sites should be moderated.

### **REPORTING**

Good social networking sites will have a well-resourced reporting function. The button should be easy to access and use. If you cannot see it, it is no use to you. Check the site. A reporting button is only as good as the system and people behind it. If you make a report and don't receive a reply within a reasonable time you might want to think about whether the site takes safety seriously. Good sites will reply promptly.

### **SAFETY CENTRES**

Well established sites will provide access to a safety centre where you can access advice on best practice, how to make the best use of the site and how to keep yourself and young users safe.

# GAMING

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When talking to children about gaming, remember the mnemonic – CHEATS

## C

### UNDERSTAND THE 5 C's

- Contact: *who they talk to*
- Content: *what they might see or share*
- Conduct: *how they behave and how others might treat them*
- Community: *the community of gamers and the mutual interest that facilitates fast growing friendships*
- Commercialisation: *the content of some games can have a negative influence on gamers that are too young to engage. As a parent, respect age ratings.*

## H

### HELP

Encourage children and young people to seek help if a conversation or something that they see online makes them feel uncomfortable. If anyone is bullying them online, they should seek help.

## E

### ELECTRONIC MESSAGES

Remind children not to share personal information including other online usernames such as those for Snapchat or Instagram.

Children should never share their phone numbers as this could also provide access to them via WhatsApp or other social media platforms. For example, the ability to search for users on Facebook using a phone number.

## A

### ANTI-VIRUS

Children should always use the most up to date version of the game that they are playing. Where appropriate, download every game from the official website.

Children should never download pirated games or cheats and always use up to date anti-virus protection.

# T

## **TAKE A PARENT/CARER TO MEET**

If a child has engaged with someone online who they believe is a genuine friend, they should bring a parent/carer with them if meeting in the real world.

*'Explain that talking to strangers online isn't always 'bad', but they should always be careful about what they share and sometimes people aren't who they say they are.'*

# S

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

When using social media, advise children to be careful not to use the same usernames as this will make it easy for other gamers to find your social media accounts e.g. Snapchat or ask.fm.

Always warn children to think twice before adding gamers as a friend on Facebook because they probably don't really know them. Remind children that adding someone as a friend on Facebook is giving that person access to a lot more personal information.

# SEXTING

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## **'Sexting' - Making, possessing or distributing an indecent image of a child is a crime!**

Sexting has been defined as *'the creating, sharing, and forwarding of sexually suggestive nude, or nearly nude images'*. In simple terms, taking a sexually explicit photograph and texting (sharing) it via mobile phone to others.

This sexually explicit content can be distributed between people, through the use of smartphones, the internet, and through online social networking sites. Recent studies claim that up to 39% of teens and 59% of young adults have sexted at least once.

Whilst adults risk embarrassment if a photo they have sent to another adult is posted or shared with a wider audience, the implications for children are much greater. Children and young people need to understand the dangers that sexting can pose. Once an image has been sent it is out of their control and may be shared on and offline with other people. They will have no control over who sees it and what they choose to do with it.

In the UK a child is a person under the age of 18. Sexting can lead to a range of problems for a child for example, cyberbullying, grooming and an enhanced level stranger danger. It can lead to serious mental health issues caused by the fear of what might happen, leading to depression that drives young people to self-harm or to contemplate suicide.

- **DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING** – Google 'sexting', read about real cases and think about what that might mean if it was your child.
- **DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE** – Your kids might tell you that people who use Snapchat, or other social media that delete images after viewing, are protected against wider sharing. **THEY ARE NOT**. There are numerous ways to get around the delete process.
- **SPEAK TO YOUR CHILD** – Think about the things you did as a young person and reflect on how life might have been if social media had existed then. Help them reflect on what you have learned by researching some recent cases.
- **TRUST** - Build a trusting relationship. If you cannot talk openly, you cannot help. Have any of their friends had problems with sexting? If so what have they learned from it?

It is important to take swift action when you know an image has been taken or shared. Children need to feel they can talk to someone so that they can report their fear that an image has been shared. If an image is posted online, they and/or the responsible adult should take steps to inform/report it to the internet service provider or report it to the relevant social media platform. In addition, they could make contact with an appropriate charity for advice and support eg. Childline or CEOP

### **TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT SENDING INAPPROPRIATE IMAGES**

Talk to them about what they're sharing and if they know who has seen the pictures. Ask them if they'd be happy for someone – like a grandparent – to see the picture? Or if they think someone they admire, maybe their favourite celebrity, would share an image like that?

Explain that they should always think carefully about what they share. Once it's been sent, they can't control what happens to it. Discuss what sort of pictures are appropriate for them to share and not to share, and make sure they understand why.

Recognise that sometimes children share pictures for a dare, or as part of a joke. Remind them that once something's shared online, they can't manage who sees it or what happens next – even if it began as a joke.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO BE AWARE OF

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### Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation, and often happens online.

Groomers use social media sites, instant messaging apps and online gaming platforms to connect with a young person.

They spend time learning about a young person's interests from their online profiles and then use this knowledge to help them build up a relationship.

It's easy for groomers to hide their identity online – they may pretend to be a child and then chat and become 'friends' with children they are targeting.

Groomers may look for:

- Usernames or comments that are flirtatious or have a sexual meaning
- Public comments that suggest a child has low self-esteem or is vulnerable

Groomers don't always target a particular child. Sometimes they will send messages to hundreds of young people and wait to see who responds.

CEOP helps keep children safe from online grooming and sexual exploitation. If someone's acted inappropriately to a child or young person you know, report it to CEOP.

**You must also ring the police!**

### Sharing Personal Information

Privacy controls can limit who can see your child's details., like their name, age and where they live. But when your child connects to someone as a 'friend', that person will have access to your child's personal information.

Some 'free' games might ask your child to fill out lots of details before they can play and then illegally rent or sell this data on to others.