

15th April 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Online Safeguarding During Lockdown

We hope that you are all well and staying safe during the current lockdown. During this time, children may be online even more than normal. There are always risks online, and we teach children about how to manage these, however some risks may be greater at the moment and we would like to share the following advice with you.

Behaviour: sharing too much information. Young people can sometimes feel anonymous without understanding the importance of keeping personal information safe and not sharing this with strangers. Make sure they feel confident enough to report inappropriate conversations, messages or behaviour to a trusted adult.

Content: age-inappropriate content, unreliable content or fake news. Young people may come across content that is inappropriate, hurtful or harmful. They can come across this content through social networks, online games, blogs and websites. Many stories are being shared across social networks about COVID 19. Try to help your children and young people understand the difference between fake news, an article written from bias and content from a reliable source.

Contact: strangers, bullies, groomers or radicalisers can contact children. If children and young people make friends online, the new online friend may not be who they say they are. Once that person has access to the young person's account, they also have access to personal information that might even include where a child lives and where they go to school. Speak to your child about their friend's list. Encourage them to remove any unknown contacts. Ask them how they differentiate between a trusted contact and a stranger online.

Ask the child or young person whether they have privacy settings on their apps. If not, it's essential to add privacy settings to apps to safeguard children from groomers, bullies, and radicalisers who seek to do harm and exploit young people. If there is concern that a young person or child has had inappropriate contact or has been approached by a stranger online, it's essential to report this to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (www.ceop.police.uk) or the police.

Bullying: In case of bullying on or offline, make sure the child is confident to report this to a trusted adult. They can report bullying to the school through the Sharp System (available on our website).

Commercialism and financial exploitation: hidden costs of advertising in apps, games and websites. Young people can be at risk of commercial exploitation online. This can include apps, advertising or marketing schemes that can inadvertently make young people spend money online. Make sure you know how to educate the young person about keeping personal information private and blocking popups and spam emails on devices. Consider using a generic family email for registering online forms.

Extremism and radicalisation: Radicalisers from extremist groups could target individuals via several means including online. They will use societal or political grievances during times of instability to pull young people into the world of extremism and violent ideologies. This may be in the form of racist memes or videos promoting a "them and us" narrative.

Mainstream platforms or messenger apps where young people share ideas and socialise, can be used by extremists to groom young people. Popular open-source messenger platforms include Discord, Rocket Chat, Viber, Discord and Telegram. Conversations promoting racist, misogynist and homophobic ideologies exploited by extremist groups. There are many more communications channels extremist use, so do be aware of what platforms young people use during this time to communicate, or what may seem like a regular chat for gamers.

You can report online material promoting terrorism or extremism via the Online Tool www.gov.uk/report-terrorism . The online tool is for reporting illegal or harmful information, pictures or videos found on the internet.

Where to find more information or help:

Our website has a dedicated safeguarding section which contains information on key safeguarding topics and links to find information and help:
<http://www.bournvilleschool.org/academy-life/safeguarding/> You can also contact one of our Designated Safeguarding Leads via email safeDSL@bournville.bham.sch.uk

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Dovey', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Mr J Dovey
Deputy Headteacher
Designated Safeguarding Lead