



Tuesday 7th February is Internet Safety Day. To celebrate the many positives of internet and to raise awareness of the issues that children and young people face online today we would like you to take a read of the following:

How schools and parents/guardians can collaborate to keep children safe online

Devices such as laptops, mobile phones, games, etc. offer unparalleled opportunities for children, e.g. to engage in self-directed learning. However, they also pose risks to the uninitiated.

As adults we need to model safe and responsible use of technology. Children need to be explicitly taught how to minimise the dangers associated with their online activity.

Establish safe parameters

Think about how technology can impact on a child's developmental needs. Physically, overuse of technology can affect sleep. Consider the material children are exposed to as they browse the internet. What types of values are being promoted? How might self-esteem be negatively impacted when comparing oneself unfavourably to carefully curated selfies of one's favourite celebrity/social media influencer?

As adults, we may be conscious that such images are likely to have been digitally edited, or at least that the subject may have selected favourable poses or enhanced their features using makeup, etc. Children however may not independently develop the faculty to critically analyse the images presented to them online or in other media. One way to combat this is to talk to the child(ren) in your life about how and why others might choose to enhance their appearance when sharing images online. Socially, children need to interact with peers to learn how to form friendships.

Children acquire language through communicating with others. Time spent playing informs their understanding of the world. Therefore, technology use should be supervised and time limited. Children find it very difficult to conceptualise their digital footprint. They may not anticipate the dangers that could arise from innocently disclosing information online such as the name of their school or tagging their location in real-time. Help children to understand why it is important to keep such information private.

Keep the lines of communication open

Sometimes the children are the experts on their online activity and this can leave us feeling at a disadvantage. One way to overcome this is to keep up an open dialogue about their digital lives. Discuss their favourite websites and their use of social media. Talk to them about what they can do if they encounter cyberbullying. One simple strategy is "stop, block and tell". Listening to children can uncover experiences they have encountered that may have left them feeling uncomfortable. For example, they may be concerned about a friend who has received nasty messages. You can pre-empt this by brainstorming what children can do if they or a friend are targeted by cyberbullying.

Garda School Internet Safety Visit

We hope our local Garda will be able to visit the school to highlight the importance of internet safety in the near future.

For further information on internet safety please visit our www.webwise.ie