

Pupil Support Team



Department of
Education

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AN ROINN
Oideachais

MÁNNYSTRIE O
Lear

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12 June 2015

To:

Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools
Education Authority
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
Governing Bodies Association
Proprietors of Independent Schools
CCEA
YCNi

Dear Colleagues

Inappropriate use of the internet and mobile technologies, such as trolling, sexting, cyberbullying or sexual exploitation, can, as we are all aware, have a devastating impact on the lives of our children and young people.

As we approach the summer holidays it may therefore be timely to think about what information might be passed on to children and young people and their parents to address any questions or concerns that they might have. The following advice has been supplied by the PSNI and endorsed by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) and may help Head Teachers draft letters to parents but also give teachers and those in the Youth Service, some simple advice. This information will also be available on the C2K exchange.

Detailed advice and guidance on eSafety is available to teachers within an eSafety Zone, also available via the C2k exchange. C2k will be offering further training and support in the entire area of eSafety to all schools during the coming year.

General advice to everyone:

We all deserve to be able to use the internet to learn, explore and connect with each other. But all of us need to be aware of the risks involved in doing so, especially on social media. Our advice is:

- Don't share personal information or images with people you don't know.
- Don't accept friend requests with someone you don't know – not everyone online may be who they say they are.

- Set privacy settings on all devices so that only people you know can view your account.
- Don't post anything online that you are not happy to be shared, particularly nude or nearly nude images or videos. It may seem like a bit of fun with friends at the time but there is always a chance those images could be shared or get into the wrong hands and could lead to harmful situations such as stalking, abuse or blackmail.
- If someone has made you feel uncomfortable or you have had disturbing interaction online, tell police or a trusted adult. You can ring the police on 101 or for help and advice ring Childline on 0800 1111 or Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.
- The internet can be a great place but it is important to remember there are people out there who may wish to abuse, exploit, intimidate or bully you online – if this happens to you, tell someone immediately.
- Remember that if things do go wrong online, there are people who can help.
- If you receive any inappropriate images or links, it is important that you do not forward it to anyone else. Contact police or tell a trusted adult immediately. By doing this you could help prevent further such incidents. You will not get into trouble.

General advice to parents:

- The most important thing is to have conversations with your children - talk to them about the benefits and dangers of the internet so that you can empower them to use the internet safely.
- Cultivate an interest in their online activities - their favourite websites, online games and interests and keep an eye on what they are doing online.
- Don't be afraid to ask your children who they are talking to online and what they are talking about and remind them how important it is to tell a trusted adult if something happens online that makes them feel uncomfortable or worried because there are people who can help.
- Become a 'net-savvy' parent - the best safeguard against online dangers is being informed. Jump in and learn the basics of the Internet - read articles, take a class, and talk to other parents. You don't have to be an expert to have a handle on your child's online world.
- Go to www.getsafeonline.org for lots of useful advice and information on how to stay safe online. Safeguardingni.org will also provide information for parents and carers on e-safety.

- Links to other sites that can provide information and advice to young people and parents are available from the DE website at:
<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/pupils-and-parents/pupils.htm>

The Department will continue to share information and advice with schools and other educational establishments as it becomes available.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Kane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ANGELA KANE

Head of Pupil Support Team