

Wednesday 15th December 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Christmas is fast approaching which means that parents and carers across the country are getting ready for the two week break. Likewise, many of our pupils will be excited to spend time at home with their families, as well as with new toys and games that they may receive for Christmas.

With various technologies being high on Christmas lists every year, it is important to ensure that you and your children are safe when playing with new devices. To help you over the holidays, here are a few top tips to help keep your household safe online.

Learn your way around the technology you buy:

Most devices have controls to ensure that children can't access content you don't want them to. These include settings for **online searching**, **"in-app" purchases**, as well as **screen time allowances**.

For any child receiving new technology on Christmas morning, there will be huge amounts of excitement to start exploring it, so it's great to have a go on any devices you buy so that you are fully aware of what it can do. This allows you to set up any restrictions in advance and learn your way around any settings and functions in case your child comes to you for help.

Set up your tablets in advance:

Tablets are really popular with younger children and there are a wide range to choose from, including child-friendly and educational models. When it comes to setting up and using tablets, why not start slowly? Download games and apps you have checked out carefully. Sites such as **Net Aware** or **Common Sense Media** provide useful advice.

Mobile phones and Tablets:

If you have older children and are thinking about getting them a phone for Christmas, this can lead to different challenges. Phones are able to do more and more each day, opening up your child to a digital world that they are eager to explore. Below are some top tips for anyone in this position:

- Set boundaries; set some ground rules, and ensure they understand them. For example:
 - a) Screen time limits,
 - b) A limit on the number of games downloaded at one time,
 - c) Keeping phones or tablets out of the bedroom overnight to charge in order to avoid night time distractions.
 - d) Have access to their phone - if you're concerned about something happening or want to take a look at the games and apps they are on, ask them to allow you access to the phone.
 - e) Ask your children about what they're doing on their phones. It is possible to install software onto devices that monitors online activity. This type of software is becoming increasingly popular, but while this might sound tempting, it does pose a number of issues around your child's right to privacy. Instead why not have a conversation about the types of things they are doing online, and create a **family agreement** to set out expected behaviour.

Deciding about gaming

Each year there are so many exciting games and consoles around so there is a good chance you might have one coming into your house. There are a few different ways to make a judgement about the types of games that are right for your child – but research is key. Downloading and using the game or app yourself is a great idea to experience first-hand what your child may be exposed to. Understandably for some parents, this can seem a little intimidating but it will also mean you're well placed to support your child if you go on to let them use it too.

Alternatively, you can go to **NetAware** or **Common Sense Media** for more information.

Setting New Year's resolutions

New Year is a great time to make some new resolutions around technology use. This could be individual resolutions around usage of technology at home, or even family agreements. Why not consider some of the following:

- Technology-Free Days
- Limiting access to apps/websites/software such as social media, online games etc.
- Setting digital bedtimes for everyone in the household

For additional information on online safety, visit the links below:

- **SWGfL:** Holidays, Toys and Tech: A checklist for parents and carers
- **Internet Matters:**
 - o Tech Tips this Christmas
 - o Guide to tech: Buying a smart toy – tips for parents
 - o Is your device on the nice list
- **Get Safe Online:** Connected Christmas
- **Childnet:**
 - o Advice for giving technology gifts this Christmas
 - o Things to consider when buying tech gifts this Christmas
- **UK Safer Internet Centre** – Top tips for staying safe online at Christmas
- **Parent Zone:** How much screen time is too much this Christmas?
- **Common Sense Media:** How Plugged-In Families Can Have a Device-Free(ish) Holiday

Best wishes,

Mr Ashley Hartwright

Online Safety and Computing Leader