Thornton Primary School

Autumn 2026 Online Safety Newsletter

This term we are sharing some articles which will hopefully support parents in making decisions about their child's online safety, in particular, the growing use of AI and how it will be affecting your child's everyday online activity.
This newsletter outlines the key updates, reminders, and practical measures that can help support safe, responsible, and confident online behaviour. We will also be addressing some of these themes through our safeguarding curriculum, ensuring that pupils continue to develop the knowledge and skills needed to navigate online environments safely and thoughtfully.
Our advice is intended to provide you with a starting point and there are links for further information which will help you to stay one step ahead – for now! Please get in touch if we can be of any further help.

Mrs Davison

New Online Safety Measures

The government announced new safety measures in Spring 2026 .

The UK Government has introduced new powers to make the internet safer for children, including closing loopholes that allow harmful content to slip through and bringing **AI chatbots under illegal-content duties** within the Online Safety Act.

AI chatbots must follow child-safety laws: Any AI chatbot that children may encounter is now legally required to prevent the creation or sharing of illegal content. This new responsibility is designed to reduce the risk of children receiving harmful or inappropriate responses from automated systems.

Greater accountability for platforms: The principle that "no platform gets a free pass" means companies face stronger expectations and consequences if they fail to keep children safe. This gives children, parents, and schools more certainty that the services children use are being held to higher safety standards.

Whilst this is a positive step forwards, it will not be perfect and unfortunately some websites/apps will continue to find ways to operate in unsafe and harmful ways. So please ensure that you are safeguarding your children by closely supervising their online activity.



At Thornton, we have seen an increase in children using age in-appropriate social media apps, which has resulted in increased concerns which we will always share with parents and carers. We particularly notice that this can cause big friendship issues and add to the online bullying that children can experience.

Keep your children safer online with BARNARDO'S

For more information regarding keeping your child safe online please visit the following website: https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/support-for-parents-and carers/child-abuse-and-harm/keeping-children-safe-online

Use 'SafeSearch': Most web search engines will have a 'SafeSearch' function, which will allow you to limit the content your child can access whilst online. Look out for the 'Settings' button on your web browser homepage, which is often shaped like a small cog.

Mobile Phones – do you know the risks?

We know that children having access to a smartphone can expose children to risks including:

- Viewing inappropriate content
- Excessive screen time/use, which in turn can affect their mental health and sleep pattern.
- Contact from inappropriate people/grooming
- Cyber bullying
- Spending money on inappropriate purchases and scams



Don't forget to also download the free National Online Safety App which can help you keep up-to-date with new developments in keeping your child/ren safe.

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

<u>What more can we do?</u>

At school, we are increasingly aware of limiting the amount of screen time that we use with the children and making sure that learning is planned in a variety of ways that get children up and about and learning outdoors.

What online parental controls are available?

Two-thirds of parents report using parental controls to help manage and limit what their children can access online, according to Internet Matters, a safety organisation established by several major UK internet companies. These tools can be an effective way to reduce exposure to inappropriate or harmful material, and the organisation provides clear guidance to support families in using them confidently. For example, YouTube, which is the platform most widely used by young people in the UK and parents wishing to minimise the risk of their child encountering unsuitable content can enable the dedicated **YouTube Kids** version. This offers a more controlled environment by filtering out adult content and tailoring the experience to younger users. **https ://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/**

Children's Commissioner launches guide for parents and carers



The Children's Commissioner has released a guide to help you in managing your child's digital life. The guide was written with direct involvement from children. It includes advice on setting boundaries such as no devices in the bedroom and how to chat to your child. There are activities you can share with your child and a step by step guide to help parents.

You can find the guide here:

'What I wish my parents or carers knew...' Children's Commissioner launches guide for parents and carers on managing children's digital lives | Children's Commissioner for England

Did you know that to use all of the following platforms you must be 13 years of age?

