



# Online Safety Newsletter: Summer Term 2020

## Smart Speakers

Smart Speakers such as Amazon Echo, Google Nest and Apple HomePod allow users to use an array of things such as listening to music, checking the weather, setting alarms and reminders etc, all using voice command. They are growing in popularity in homes in the UK and recent research, as of June 2020, has suggested 1 in 5 households now own some sort of Smart Speaker. This means that 5.8 million homes in the UK have such devices for their families to use.

Many of these devices listen constantly for commands with some versions offering cameras and screens. They connect to corporate servers to carry out the commands given to them. Typically, they will ignore private chatter but will listen for commands such as "OK Google" or "Hey Siri", alternatively some devices are operated by pressing a button. Some gadgets have a mute button, which allows the users to disable the microphone completely.

Whilst smart speakers provide excellent convenience, some features may leave you vulnerable to cyber threats and unwanted data sharing. Being aware of concerns with smart speakers' privacy and security will help you stay safe and ward against the weaknesses your device may have.

The following information is an overview from the Safer Schools creator Ineqe's recent blog post 'What you need to know about Smart Speakers' and you can find the full article with links to further information here <https://ineqe.com/2020/06/22/what-you-need-to-know-about-smart-speakers/>

### Amazon Echo

Amazon's Echo devices use the AI-powered virtual assistant Alexa, with a children's version just launched called Echo Dot Kids Edition, which filters inappropriate words and content, both need an Echo and an Amazon Account.

Parental restrictions available with the Echo are:

- You can turn off in-app voice purchasing, or set a code to prevent children from ordering from Amazon.
- You can set parental controls to restrict inappropriate content
- Turn off or restrict 'drop-in'. This feature allows users to drop into a video call with someone else's Echo.
- Activate the 'Do not disturb' option. To avoid interruptions at night whilst the family are asleep.
- Alexa can be set to delete everything said today. Alternatively, use the app to delete data older than 1 day.



## IMVU

### Age rating (17+)

Apple rate IMVU (Instant Messaging Virtual Universe) as 17+ and Google Play urge 'parental guidance'.

The Apple stores description of this App is 'IMVU is the #1 3D Avatar-based social experience with the largest 3D world and catalogue to customise your look and meet new people'.

This App is a virtual world game like SIMS where users interact using Avatars. It is high risk and dangerous for children. Parents should be aware that there is nudity and sexual encounters in areas that are for 18+, but there is also sexual talk and behaviours in the regular areas. In addition, there is a Chat Now feature that randomly pairs users allowing predators to meet children. All profiles are public enabling bullying to take place and information shared easily.

Please see the video on the YouTube channel by Ineqe - [Pause, think & plan: Talking to children about online risk](https://www.youtube.com/watch)

## Google Nest

Google Nest (original called Google Home) was originally released to compete against Amazon's Echo in 2017. You will need an Android device and a Google Account.

Parental restrictions available with the Nest are:

- Users can set up Family Link. This is done by setting up another account for your child. This will require another android device, but will be controlled from yours. Your child's voice will be added to your Nest.
- Make sure you use Google's Digital Wellbeing Tool. This allows users to set up filters for music, video and assistant queries.
- You can turn off Google's Pay Assistant to prevent any unwanted purchases.
- Just like Alexa, you can delete all voice recordings via the Google Assistant app and adjust settings to delete ever 3 or 18 months.

## Apple HomePod

HomePod is Apple's answer to the Amazon Echo. There is a greater emphasis on sound and music quality and uses the well known AI assistant Siri to help users with a range of tasks. You will need an Apple device and Apple ID.

Parental restrictions available with the HomePod are:

- You can stop your child from accessing explicit content.
- Users are able to lock personal requests. This is what Apple call the ability to send and read texts, add reminders and create notes. This will prevent anyone sending messages from your Apple device.
- You can prevent children from making in-app purchases.
- As with the two previous devices, you can delete voice recordings. It is important to note that Apple will keep recordings from your speaker for up to 2 years, listed as random and not assigned to you in order to help with developing Siri.

## Safer Schools App survey

Once you have downloaded and explored the app it would be very useful to hear your views so that you as parents can be best supported in the future. Please go to the **Surveys** section and select the **Safer Schools App parent feedback** survey to share your initial views by answering the 7 quick questions.

## Quizzes and Digital Tests

There are a number of Quick Quizzes and also Digital Tests to help you test your knowledge, should you wish to try the Digital Tests please use the pin number 7575 to enter the Tests.

## Final Thoughts...

Do you allow your children to have their tech in their bedrooms?

Do you know what your children are doing on their tech?

Do you know what Apps they use regularly and who they are in contact with?

Please use this opportunity to talk to your children and find out the answers to the above questions. Better still only allow tech use in the general areas of the house, especially with the younger ones.

## Further support

Mrs McLean is available on email at [h.mclean@archbishoptemple.com](mailto:h.mclean@archbishoptemple.com) for further help and advice should you require any assistance outside of school.