'LET'S CREATE A BETTER INTERNET TOGETHER'

Mobile Phones

A mobile world

As I am sure you are all aware we live in a mobile world where we have easy access to an array of information at the touch of a button. As adults, the majority of us are never far from our mobile phones and the growing culture is that younger and younger children now have their own mobiles.

Issues

There are many positives to children having their own mobile phones but there are also some issues we need to be aware of which include: use of the internet, Bluetooth (people can locate the devices of others) and text messages. The difficulty with mobile phones is it is very difficult to monitor what your child is using it for but hopefully the attached guides on setting up parental controls will give you a bit of peace of mind.

Contracts

We are aware that some parents feel happier if their child has a mobile phone at school for when they are walking home alone. We would like to remind you that we only allow mobile phones in school for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and we have now introduced a Mobile Phone Contract to ensure parents are aware when their child is bringing a phone to school and also to highlight the importance of not taking pictures etc whilst on school property. If your child brings a mobile phone to school they will need to complete the attached mobile phone contract.

Don't forget to look at the Think U Know website for any information to help with e-safety at home.

The 'How to' guide for this week is setting up parental settings on mobile phones.

Advice for Parental Mobile Phone Control

- All mobile phone providers offer free parental control services which limit the content children can access via the mobile network to items suitable for under 18s. However, they may not always be automatically switched on. Check with your service provider that the parental control settings are switched on, and ask for them to be switched on if they are not. This is particularly important if the phone was used by an adult before.

- Many mobiles can use Bluetooth to send messages, photos and videos between phones. However, this means that other people are able to send unwanted messages which parental controls can't stop. But, you can turn Bluetooth on and off using the mobile handset or you can stop other people being able to access your phone without your permission. Instructions on how to do this should be contained in the handset manual. If you need help, ask your service provider. It is important that you discuss using Bluetooth with your child.

- Young people often take photographs and videos of themselves and each other on their mobile phones but they should be very careful how they then share these images. Embarrassing or inappropriate photos/videos could easily be passed between phones and put online. Once sent or put online, control over the images may be lost and they could end up in the hands of strangers. Photographs or videos may also be used to fuel bullying or harassment. Visit the thinkuknow website for more information and advice on this.

- Chatrooms are popular with children and young people and while mobile providers' own chatrooms aimed at children may be moderated, others might not be. Discuss with your child which sites they are visiting, what's OK to post and what behaviour is acceptable. Visit the Chatdanger website for more information and advice on this.

- If your child has a profile on a social networking site they may access it on their mobile phone. Ensure they know why it is important to allow their personal information only to be shared with people they know in the real world. Most of the larger social networking sites specify a minimum age of 13 for all members. For those sites that are aimed at younger children, parental consent and confirmation of the child's age will usually be required. Check the minimum age requirement for users – ask your child which sites they visit to make sure they're visiting sites appropriate for their age.