WHY IS ONLINE SAFETY SO IMPORTANT?

Technology is now ubiquitous in our daily lives. It has been, and will continue in future to be, of huge benefit to our day-to-day activities. It is therefore incredibly important that we prepare children for this technology-driven world so that they can deal with online content independently and safely.

In September 2016, it became a statutory requirement that all children in primary and secondary education should be taught safeguarding principles (Keeping children safe in education September 2016). The teaching of online safety is also a statutory requirement of the National curriculum in England: computing programmes of study.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

There are four key online safety risks, often cited as the four Cs:

• Content (accessing inappropriate content)

•Contact (inappropriate contact)

• Conduct (inappropriate behaviour)

• Commercialisation (online manipulation by commercial organisations).

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF AN ONLINE SAFETY PROGRAMME

At St Anne’s we use Switched on Online Safety, from Rising Stars to facilitate a structured approach to online safety learning.

A fundamental element of online safety is supporting children to develop resilience. Rather than preventing children from using technology because it is deemed unsafe, it is far better to teach children to manage these risks safely.

Children need to be able to navigate and make decisions so they are able to self-regulate independently when they leave primary school.

ENGAGING PARENTS AND CARERS

Parental engagement is fundamental to the success of safeguarding children online and it underpins all units of learning from year 1 to 6. We encourage parents or carers to talk openly about online safety issues with their children as it helps children to develop safe online habits regardless of whether they are at home or at school.

ROBUST REPORTING

The use of appropriate reporting routes has been embedded through the Rising Stars scheme and phase-specific reporting routes are provided in every unit.

POSITIVE TECHNOLOGY ACTIVITY

At St Anne’s we understand the importance of encouraging the use of positive, age appropriate and purposeful technology. Technology can be fun and engaging, why not explore geocaching (treasure-hunting using GPS), make short family movies, or even to code together (using platforms such as Scratch and ScratchJr).

From Early Years children are taught to share their online worries with a trusted adult, this teaching continue through KS1 and KS2. Later in Year 6 children are taught about reporting within websites by clicking the CEOP button.

Do you have an online safety concern now? Contact the UK Safer Internet Centre at helpline@ saferinternet. org.uk, 0844 381 4772.

COMMON-SENSE PRINCIPLES

Much of online safety is about using and applying common sense.

Common sense principles should help both children and their parents and carers apply positive offline behaviours such as respect, responsibility, and an understanding of risk to online scenarios.

It is important to recognise that removing access to technology both on and offline can actually lead to an increased risk. Teachers and parents should feel confident about reinforcing positive messages around technology in a similar way to everyday conversations around eating 5 a day and crossing the road safely.

These positive messages might include:

• limiting screen time each day

• advice on mobile phone usage

• protecting security on phones and tablets used by children

• reading real books at bedtime

• using age-appropriate technology (including PEGI ratings for games).