

e-Safety for Pupils with Additional Needs

Whole school/setting e-Safety strategies should be established to protect a cohort of children and young people. Strategies also need to provide the scope to include individual needs that vulnerable students may display. It is advisable to consult with the school SENCo for input into the writing of the e-Safety policy; this would provide a specialist perspective to synchronize support with policy.



- There are four specific areas of concern that all schools should consider in their e-safety policy:
 - ◆ Information presentation: can students read and understand words and messages?
 - ◆ Communication skills: how will students communicate what has happened?
 - ◆ Differentiation: do they remember concepts and ideas?
 - ◆ Consistency: can they transfer skills from one activity to another?

There are many variations to school policies, populations and resources available to support e-safety initiatives within schools. Here are some considerations regarding possible ways to support a generic group of children who may require additional support to move forward in safeguarding themselves.

- A fundamental part of teaching e-safety is to check pupil's understanding and knowledge of general personal safety issues. Some pupils may need additional teaching that includes reminders and explicit prompts to link their existing knowledge of "how to keep safe" to the rules that will apply specifically to, for instance, internet use. Some children will lack the ability to regulate their own behaviour online and will require closure supervision and instruction.
- Online safety education with pupils with additional needs will need to be repeated. One off events or assemblies will not be as effectively as direct and differentiated learning which is adapted specifically for students needs.
- Rules are very helpful to all pupils and it is important to achieve consistency of how rules can be applied.
 - ◆ This is a difficult area for some pupils who will usually learn rules within certain contexts, but who will find it difficult to transfer these rules across environments, lessons or teachers. Schools need to consider whether a scheme or resources are applicable or accessible to all school situations where internet access may be possible.
 - ◆ As consistency is so important for these pupils, there is a need to establish e-safety rules for school that are similar to those for home. Working with parents and sharing information with them would be relevant to all children, but this group especially.

- ◆ There will always be exceptions to rules and if this is the case, then these pupils will need to have additional explanations about why rules might change in different situations i.e. why it is ok to give your name and address to an adult if you are lost in town, but not when using the internet.
- ◆ It might be helpful to consider presenting the rules as being linked to consequences such that you are teaching cause-effect rather than a list of procedures. This needs to be achieved carefully so as to use realistic and practical examples of *what might happen if...* without frightening pupils
- ◆ The general e-safety messages may need to be broken down and explained in greater detail to children with additional needs in a variety of contexts and approaches. Children may require lots of examples of safe and unsafe experiences be provided and supported with frequent repetition of the core and overarching safety (both on and offline) messages. All teaching needs to be delivered in an age and context appropriate way and take into account individual pupil need and experience.
- ◆ It is important that professionals and parents regularly talk to children and create an open and positive dialogue about the technology they have and use in everyday life. We need help to help children with additional needs to create and maintain safe online lives

How rules are presented could be vital to help these pupils understand and apply some of the rules they need to learn.

- Visual support is usually important to help most pupils' understanding but some areas of this topic are quite abstract in nature and difficult to represent visually i.e.
 - ◆ Uncomfortable
 - ◆ Smart
 - ◆ Stranger
 - ◆ Friend

It might be helpful to ask pupils to produce a drawing or write a mini-class dictionary that describes and defines these words in their own terms with appropriate symbols and contacts.

- Visual support can be useful but it is more likely that the pupils will respond to multi-media presentations of the rules such as interactive power-point slides, screensavers, spoken recordings of the main rules or sounds that they can associate with decisions they make while using the internet. The really useful thing about these is the repetition and practice that pupils can have with these which may not be so easy if spoken language were used.
- If visual prompts are used to help remember the rules, the picture or image support needs to give the pupils some improved understanding of what the rule is about. It is quite easy to find attractive pictures that link to other abstract ideas not related to internet use i.e. use of a compass to show "lose track" of a search when a head looking



confused is more like what happens.

- This group of pupils are vulnerable to poor social understanding that may leave them open to risks when using the internet individually, but also when with peers.
 - ◆ It can be common for peers to set up scenarios or “accidents” regarding what they look for on the internet and then say it was someone else who has done so. Adults need to plan group interactions carefully when raising awareness of internet safety.
 - ◆ Some pupils in this group may choose recreational internet activities that are perhaps simpler or aimed at pupils younger than themselves. By their very nature, these activities tend to be more controlled and less open to naïve mistakes. Staff need to plan how to manage pupils who may want to do the same as other peers but who may need small step teaching due to limited experiences with internet use
- For various reasons, pupils with additional needs may find it difficult to explain or describe events when using the internet. They may also be unable to identify risks
 - ◆ Some pupils might find it easier to show adults what they did i.e. replay which will obviously have it’s own issues for staff regarding repeating access
 - ◆ Some pupils are very quick to click with the mouse or touch screen and may not actually know what they did or how something happened. Gentle investigation will be more productive than asking many questions.
- Some students may not be able to ask for help or verbalise concerns. Staff will need to know specific pupils well so that this can be addressed.
 - ◆ Pupils may need a system or a help sound set up on computers which will help them to get adult attention. If pupils don’t recognise that they need help, then adult supervision is the safe way to improve their recognition of this.

Useful websites for resources

- www.childnet.com
- www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- www.netsmartz.org/SpecialNeeds
- www.childnet.com/star
- www.em-esafetyproject.co.uk
- www.carrick-davies.com/mpp
- http://www.kelsi.org.uk/pupil_support_and_wellbeing/safety_health_and_wellbeing/child_protection_safeguarding/e-safety.aspx

