



Safeguarding Newsletter—Spring Term 1 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you all had a good Christmas holiday and wish you a Happy New Year

All staff at Belle Vue have a responsibility to safeguard children but just a reminder to you that we have the following designated staff in place with responsibility for safeguarding:

Mrs. C Davies—Designated Safeguarding lead
Mrs. S Richardson—Deputy Safeguarding lead
Mrs. A Perrett—Deputy Safeguarding Lead
Mrs. C Mulligan—Deputy Safeguarding lead

Governor responsible for safeguarding: Mrs. S Rose

If you have any concerns regarding the safeguarding of a child/children please contact the school immediately on 01384 389900 or email info@belle-vue.dudley.sch.uk. **During holiday time, please email safeguarding concerns to:** safeguarding@belle-vue.dudley.sch.uk

If you suspect a child is in immediate danger please ring 999.

Staying Safe Online—Does your child own a new device?

Over Christmas, some lucky children will have excitedly torn off the wrapping for a new mobile phone, tablet or games console. For some, it will be the first time they have owned a device that connects them to the online world. Even for older children, a new device means new corners of the digital landscape to explore – and, unfortunately, new risks to be aware of.

The National Online Safety Team have put together some top tips so that you can guide your young ones in enjoying their new digital gifts safely and responsibly.

1. Gifts such as Tablets, Gaming Consoles or Smartphones can all be used to go online so it is important to think ahead about what safety features are available and set them up in advance. The UK Internet Safety Centre have some very useful checklists with things to consider when choosing different devices.

Tip: The Safer Internet Centre has some excellent advice in their Parents' guide to Technology and includes device-specific settings for different models:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-guide-to-technology>

2. Setting up Parental Controls on the home internet connection may seem a little daunting but the highly regarded Internet Matters website has some really useful guidance from major broadband providers about setting up online filters.

Tip: Use the Interactive Guide on the website at:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/>



3. Agreeing some Behaviours and Expectations before children receive devices can prevent some difficult conversations later. Additionally, Childnet have a hand Family Agreement which can be useful, especially for younger children – see www.childnet.com/blog/family-agreement
Tip: good agreements work both ways so if family-time involves no tech, this applies to adults too!

4. Games can be over-looked but remember most modern consoles connect online and often have in-built web browsers. Ensuring appropriate gaming content is also important so check the PEGI-rating for different games, including the descriptions such as Sex, Violence or Bad Language – see: www.pegi.info
Tip: Some games offer in-game purchases for additional content. If so, use vouchers rather than credit cards to help save you from unexpected bills later.

5. Don't forget the positives! Being aware of the potential risks the online world poses is very important but don't forget it offers us immense opportunities and benefits, If you still aren't too sure, get involved and ask your child to teach you about their online world and what they do (and don't) like!

Further Advice

Always set a password

If your child's new device has a password protection feature, use it! It'll help keep their private information safe and will deny others access to their device without permission. Your children's passwords should be something memorable to them – but something which other people can't guess (it's also a good idea for parents to write it down in case it gets forgotten!)



Pay attention to age ratings

One of the first things children want to do with any device is play games and explore apps. Before they download or install a new console game, check its age rating. Many popular games and apps have content that is not suitable for younger ages. The safest long-term solution is to adjust the device's settings so they can only download and use games appropriate for their age.



Have 'the money conversation'

Before your children start using their new device in earnest, talk to them about in-app purchases and other ways that money might be spent through their device. Once they understand, you might want to agree on a spending limit and reassure them that they can come to you if they're uncertain or have made a purchase by accident.



Explain secure WiFi Networks

Your home WiFi is protected by a password that only your family knows, whereas public networks (like those in coffee shops for example) can be accessed by anyone. It's important that your child grasps this difference because, if they're using a portable device on an unsecured network, then a hacker could access their personal information without them knowing.



Limit screen time

Using a device for too long, especially just before bed, can interfere with a child's sleep quality and reduce their concentration and overall enthusiasm. It might be helpful to agree on certain times of day when they don't use their device. Most devices' settings let you specify a screen-time limit, helping your child stay fresh and focused in order to perform well at school.





Only pair with known Bluetooth devices

Your child may want to connect to another device via Bluetooth so they can listen to music wirelessly or share pictures and videos with nearby friends. But, if they use Bluetooth to link with a device they don't know, they're at risk of a stranger being able to see their personal information or having someone transmit a virus to their device.

Turn location settings off

It's safest to disable the device's location services (if it's a portable device) so your child doesn't inadvertently make other people aware of where they are. You can usually do this via the device's privacy control settings. Turning location settings off not only means your child's whereabouts can't be tracked by others, it also significantly extends battery life.



Be there if they need to talk

Even when you've made a device as secure as you can, there's still a possibility of your child seeing something that bothers them or someone they don't know attempting to contact them. If this happens, listen to their concerns, empathise and reassure them. Once they've explained what happened, you can decide if you should take further action like blocking or reporting another user.



LEGO Build and Talk

LEGO® have created Build and Talk to help you chat to your child about digital safety and wellbeing. Firstly, you pick an activity to do and then you read a story, which includes questions and conversation prompts, whilst they build with their LEGO®.

This is a great way to start talking about online safety with your child!

<https://www.lego.com/en-gb/sustainability/children/buildandtalk/>

Whilst you're there, view their guides on key topics related to online safety <https://www.lego.com/en-gb/sustainability/children/digital-child-safety/> or play Doom the Gloom with your child, which will support them in using the internet safely: <https://www.lego.com/en-us/kids/campaigns/doom-the-gloom>

