Further advice to discuss with your child:

Privacy settings
These settings give the user the ability to control who they share particular content with, for example making a photo you post visible to Friends only or to the Public. Encourage children and young people to use the privacy tools available on the social networking site to protect their personal information and to keep their passwords private (even from their friends).

Most social networking sites give safety advice and information on their safety tools. For example see **www.facebook.com/safety** for more in-depth information on Facebook privacy settings.

Online Friendship
Remind them to only add people they know and trust in the offline world to their contact lists on social networking sites.

Geolocation
Young people must be aware of who they are sharing their location with. If they are accessing a social networking site via a smartphone or mobile device, they might be disclosing their location without realising it. Location services can be turned on or off within the settings of a device.

Think Before You Post
Emphasise the importance of thinking before you post something online. This can include writing a comment or sharing a picture. Discuss with them what is and isn't OK to say in a post and remind them that sometimes messages online can be misunderstood. What may start out as a harmless joke for one person, can be extremely hurtful for another individual and once something is posted online it is potentially there forever. If you are not sure, or if you wouldn't be happy for your Head Teacher to see it, it's probably best not to post it. Your online reputation can also be affected by other behaviour, such as groups you join or clicking 'likes'.

Consider the photos you upload
It's important that children consider the nature of and impact of photos they post online, the attention that may be drawn to the photo, and who can see the photo. They should always ensure that they ask permission from others before posting pictures of them online.

Know how to report
Know how to block other users and know how to report – make sure children and young people know how to report abusive comments or illegal activity on social networking sites. Popular social networking sites allow you to report a comment or user who is potentially breaking their terms and conditions, by clicking on a report button or sending the site an email. If young people have concerns about cyberbullying then they should speak to a trusted adult as well as saving the evidence, and even use the tools available to block other users. If you have concerns that your child is or has been the subject of inappropriate sexual contact or approach by another person, it's vital that you report it to the police via the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (**www.ceop.police.uk**).

Logging out
Once you have finished using a social networking site, it is important to log out. Specifically when using a public or shared computer and also on mobile devices. Make sure you have activated a PIN on your mobile device, as a mislaid device can mean that others can access your social networking profile.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q My child is underage, but has created a social networking profile. What should I do?

A Research shows us that a large number of children have created a social networking profile before they are at the correct age (usually 13) to do so. It is important to respect the terms of use of the site and register with the correct age, as there are additional protections in place for younger users. If the site however discovers that underage users are using the service, they will delete their account. You should discourage underage use of these services as best you can, and be aware of services which cater for younger users by having higher safety features.

However, before young people start using social networking services it is important that they are equipped with the skills to stay safe online and to use social networking sites responsibly. Sit down together and make sure that you both know how to use the privacy tools that are provided. There are multiple ways in which a social networking profile can remain private that will prevent your child from giving out personal information to strangers. Support your child in ensuring that they only add contacts to these sites that they also know and trust offline. One way to keep an eye on how your child uses a social networking site is to connect with them.

Q Can my child limit who accesses their profile?

A It is possible to set profiles to private or friends only, which restricts access only to those who have been granted permission to see it. This is different to a public profile which can be seen by anyone. Depending on the social networking site, the privacy settings do differ so it is imperative that users check their settings. It is important that children should register with their real age so that they are included in the protections made available by default to their age group.

Q Does my child's profile appear in a public search engine (eg. Google)?

A There are ways that you can prevent your profile from appearing in search engine results; most social networking sites allow you to remove your profile from public search results by using the privacy settings.

Q How can I report inappropriate behaviour and what happens when I make a report?

A Social networking sites should have clear, prominent and accessible places to make a report. Providers should respond promptly to reports from users, and some will acknowledge each report with a confirmation that it has been received and provide indication of the timescale in which the complaint will be managed. Make sure you talk with your child about these tools and ensure that they know how to use them.

Childnet International

YOUNG PEOPLE AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Childnet International

These types of sites allow young people to be creative online and keep in touch with their friends, as well as sharing photos and videos. On some social networks, young people can follow their favourite celebrity which means they can access the content they update and share. However, for parents and carers it's important to have a look at these services, or have a go, in order to familiarise yourself with social networking sites. Most sites stipulate a minimum user age of 13, although some interactive sites are designed specifically for younger children.

By understanding these sites and their potential risks you can help to support your children in choosing an appropriate site and using it in a safe and constructive way, and be able to help them if they need it.
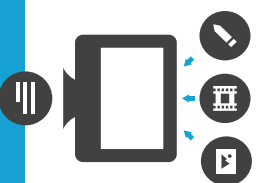
+13

Most sites stipulate a minimum user age of 13

Social networking and your child's digital footprint

Many things can contribute to your child's digital footprint including what they post and who they interactive with. Young people are accessing and using social networking sites on a range of devices, such as mobile phones, tablets and gaming devices. They use social networking sites for many different purposes, to communicate with their friends, to share photos, to play games and to find out new information. You need to remind your child however that they need to be careful about what they're posting online and who can see it. Children can sometimes believe that social networking sites are a private space for them and it can be difficult for them to realise that actually what they're posting online may be public and can be spread very quickly and to a large audience. The blur between public and private expression can potentially put a child at risk in two main ways:
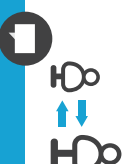
Content

Children who create or post inappropriate, offensive or even illegal content in their own or others' web pages could get them into trouble with their school, friends, or even break the law, depending on the nature of the material. It's also important that young people understand the longevity of posting something online. Once content is uploaded onto a website, it could potentially stay online forever. Regardless of whether the owner takes down the content, anyone who had access to that content could have copied it for themselves, kept it for their own records or distributed it further. Content which is uploaded online can be copied, altered and reposted by anyone and it is very difficult to 'take back' things that may be later regretted. This can damage reputations and even future prospects.

Contact

Young people need to be aware of how much personal information they upload onto these sites. If a user of a social networking site doesn't protect their information by enabling the correct privacy settings, they could be exposing their information to strangers and as a result be at risk of online contact and grooming. Posting or chatting about personal details might enable someone to identify and contact your child online or in person. There is also the more likely risk of cyberbullying with young people intentionally harming another person online. Talk to your child about protecting their privacy online and talk through the available privacy settings with them.

It's a good idea to talk to your child about their social networking life online. In the same way that you might ask them about their social life offline, talking about social networking sites together is no different. One way to get the conversation going is by asking them whether they know where to go for help, or whether they know how to make their profile private, or even ask them to help you with your privacy settings.

SMART rules

As well as producing some useful conversation starters for parents and children: **www.saferinternet.org.uk/ufiles/Conversation-Starters-for-Parents.pdf**. Childnet has produced 5 key SMART rules which remind young people to be SMART online. It can be helpful to go through these tips with your children.

S Safe: Keep safe by being careful not to give out personal information when you're chatting or posting online. Personal information includes your email address, phone number and password.

M Meeting: Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents' or carers' permission and even then only when they can be present.

A Accepting: Accepting emails, Instant Messenger (IM) messages, or opening files, pictures or texts from people you don't know or trust can lead to problems – they may contain viruses or nasty messages!

R Reliable: Information you find on the internet may not be true, or someone online may be lying about who they are.

T Tell: Tell your parent, carer or a trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.

Useful Links:
www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/hot-topics/social-networking
www.ceop.police.uk
www.facebook.com/safety
www.iwf.org.uk
https://support.twitter.com