Top Tips for Online Safety and Screen Time

Due to these unusual and difficult circumstances we all find ourselves in, there is no wonder that many of us are finding that extra screen time is a way to help pass the time and manage behaviour.

As so many of our young people are spending more time on their devices than they ordinarily would, we have provided the following information, tips and links to help you to make this screen time safer and to support you in ways to control the amount and type of screen time your son or daughter is accessing.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has created guidance for under 18s screen time use. They recognise that there is not a 'one size fits all' approach and do not recommend set amounts of screen time for different ages. They do however advise that screen time should not:

- Replace sleep or be used in the hour before bedtime
- Replace family time or interfere with family plans
- Replace exercise
- Replace meal times or be used during snack or meal times.

Childnet have created a family agreement to help set boundaries for screen time. Where possible, this can be completed together with older children, or used just by parents, reflecting on the questions to make decisions that are right for your family: https://www.childnet.com/ufiles/Family-Agreement.pdf

Childnet also suggest **4 top tips** to help you feel in control of your child's use of technology:

1. **Use digital devices together** - Get involved in your child's online activities. Have fun, play games and learn together online, just as you would in the physical world. It will then be natural for your child to turn to you if they experience anything upsetting online.
2. **Set clear expectations** – Clear family rules can help your child have a positive start to their digital life and get the most out of being online. Ask your child to help create some family rules.
3. **Be informed** - Many digital devices, services and content providers offer a range of parental controls. You can choose the type of content and options that are suitable for your child.
4. **Establish good habits early on** – Both adults and children enjoy sharing moments with family and friends through online images and videos. Starting conversations and good habits early on is a great way to support children in staying safe online.

The following three links offer excellent resources, which support you in following Childnet's top tips:

Childnet's parents and carers resource sheet:
https://www.childnet.com/ufiles/Parents-and-carers-resource-sheet-1019.pdf
Offers further advice for managing and supporting online behaviour and in tackling any issues that arise online.

Internet Matters Parental Controls guide**:**
https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/
Offers an excellent step by step guide for setting parental controls on a wide range of devices, search engines, games consoles, mobile networks and social media. These parental controls can help you control what your son or daughter can access online and set time limits for time spent on apps or devices.

Do be aware however that whilst parental controls and privacy settings can be useful tools in reducing the risks your son or daughter may face online, *they are not 100% effective*. It is incredibly important to teach your child skills like *critical thinking* and *resilience*, so they know what do if they encounter risk. Always encourage them to talk to you about anything they find upsetting online.

NSPCC's Net Aware App Reviews**:**
https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/
Offers up to date reviews and guidance of popular apps, games and social networks to help you keep informed about what your son or daughter might be accessing online, what the app icon looks like, what they can do in each app, game or network and the level of risk for factors such as bulling, violence, and sexual exploitation linked to each.

The internet can be a wonderful tool for learning, leisure and keeping in touch, especially now, when we are unable to do many of these things in person.

We hope that this information helps you to do this in a safer way and to set boundaries that feel right for you and your family.

If you have any concerns or queries regarding online safety you can contact school via info@loyne.lancs.sch.uk and we will do our best to support you in these matters.