Parental controls – parents can install controls on phones, enabling them to filter which games, apps and websites their child can use, as well as monitor their usage. Some controls even allow parents to view the content of their children's messages.

Be an educator

Be open and transparent with your child, and discuss how they use their mobile phones. Doing so can help them understand what is appropriate and what is expected of them.

Not sure how to start the conversation? Create questions based on the ideas below:

- Ask what websites, apps and games they use, why they use them, and what they involve.
- Ask how they make sure they use their mobile phone safely. Find out how their privacy settings work, and how they can report or block other users on the services they use.
- Ask them if they know where to go to get help or report something inappropriate.
- Ask them if they can help you, or someone else, do something online – this is a great way to find out what they know.



Something to think about: how do you use the internet in your home? What could you do to use the internet together?



Top tips for limiting screen time:

- Talk about why using a mobile phone too much can have negative effects.
- Establish a daily screen-time limit – if you set one of these, parents should try to stick to it too.
- Establish time boundaries for using phones, and consider rules for using mobile phones within bedrooms, particularly at night time.
- Keep a weekly family screen diary and log habits.
- Set rules for using mobile phones during
- social situations, e.g. evening family meals.
- Try to avoid using access to mobile
- phones as a reward or punishment as this will make time with mobile phones more valued, and may make them want to spend more time using it.
- Be a positive role model – if you limit the amount of time you spend on your mobile phone, your child will be more likely to do the same.

Further information

NSPCC website

UK Safer Internet Centre

Read our school's E-safety Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy for more information.

Mobile phones and children



Do you know everything there is to know?

What is my child using their mobile phone for?

There are a variety of reasons why children may use mobile phones – some of the most common reasons include sharing photos and videos, texting, gaming, social media and instant messaging.

Usually, mobile phone communication involves chatting with friends and peers and, most importantly, people they know.

Whilst mobile phones might seem safe, parents should consider putting certain controls in place to ensure their children are using their mobile phones correctly.

So, what are the risks?

Risks can vary depending on children's ages; however, there are many common risks that most children will encounter when using their mobile phones.



Inappropriate behaviour – children need to be mindful of their behaviour, including their language. If they act inappropriately towards someone, they may face serious consequences if it is reported. Children need to be aware of what they post online, including who can view this information and whether it will put anyone at risk. They should understand what is appropriate to post online and what is not.



Content – some online content is not suitable for children of certain ages, particularly on social media, apps, online games, blogs and other websites..

Children can be exposed to explicit, harmful or untruthful content, if they are unaware of age restrictions or how to determine which websites are reliable..



Contact – your child may be exposed to inappropriate behaviour and contact from the people they engage with.

Children may interact with people they don't know online, as well as people that pose as someone else.



Commercialism – Advertisements and marketing can present harmful risks through the use of inadvertently spending money on apps and games, or through spam emails.

Through commercialism, companies can also access certain personal data about individuals, particularly when filling in online forms.



Health and wellbeing – Children spend an increasing amount of time on their phones, particularly when their parents aren't always aware, e.g. at night. Doing so can lead to sleepless nights and tiredness, which will affect them in many aspects of their lives.

Using mobile phones can also bring feelings of anxiousness, stress and worry, particularly if any of the other risks are involved.



Cyber bullying – Whilst most children communicate appropriately, some may use mobile phones to bully others. This could involve sending harmful or hurtful messages, sharing pictures and videos, or posting on social media.



How parents can help

Set an example – teach your child about what is safe to share or post online, and what is not. Model this for your child on any social media or other site you use, to make sure they understand what is acceptable.

Be app savvy – familiarise yourself with age restrictions on any apps, websites and games to make sure they're appropriate for your child. If any of these asks for personal information, consider whether it is necessary, and avoid doing so.

Location, location, location – many apps ask to share a phone's location when using them – this can put children at risk by letting others know where they are. Make sure your child disables their location any app you don't deem it to be necessary.

Set standards – make sure your child understands how to act appropriately towards others when using their mobile phone. Likewise, make sure they know what to do if they are concerned that someone is acting inappropriately towards them.



Down time is important – set boundaries on the times that your child can use their mobile phone. It may not be appropriate for your child to use their phone late at night, when it is expected they will be sleeping. Constant phone use can affect sleep, concentration and focus – all of which can have a negative impact on activities in day-to-day life.