Supporting girls & young women to stay safe online

This week, our safeguarding focus turns to online safety for girls and young women. While every child faces challenges in digital spaces, research and school experience show that girls often encounter particular pressures linked to appearance, communication, and social expectations.

In an international community like ours - where families bring diverse cultural values and beliefs - it is vital that we understand these pressures and work together to support our daughters and grand-daughters in navigating the online world with confidence and care.

Supporting girls in a digital landscape

Many girls grow up surrounded by images and messages that promote unrealistic beauty standards. Filters, editing tools, and influencer culture can create a constant sense of comparison that affects self-esteem. Even confident young people may feel unsure when they see seemingly 'perfect' lives and appearances on their screens. It is important to remind girls that online content is often carefully created, and that their worth is not tied to how they look or what others think of them.

Another area of concern is the way girls are contacted online. Even seemingly harmless conversations can become uncomfortable, especially when initiated by strangers or older individuals. Girls may receive comments about their appearance, or be encouraged to continue conversations privately. They may also feel uncertain about how to handle messages that feel intrusive or persistent. In our cultural context - where modesty, reputation, and privacy are highly valued - these situations can be particularly distressing.

Friendship dynamics can also become complicated online. Group chats may move quickly, misunderstandings escalate, or a girl may feel excluded when friends post without her. For many young people, what happens on social media feels just as real as what happens face-to-face, and the emotional impact should never be underestimated.

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Understanding the risks

Some girls experience pressure to share personal information or photographs. This pressure is not always obvious; it can come disguised as compliments, kindness, or friendship. Requests for secrecy, attempts to move conversations to private platforms, or persistent messaging are all signs of unsafe behaviour. Girls - who are often encouraged from a young age to be polite and accommodating - may find it particularly challenging to end these interactions.

At the same time, they may encounter influencers or online content that normalises harmful stereotypes or presents unhealthy expectations of what it means to be a young woman. Without guidance, such messages can shape their thinking and behaviour in ways that undermine confidence or encourage self-criticism.

How parents can help

What girls often need most is the reassurance that they can talk openly about anything that happens online. They may worry about disappointing adults or losing access to their phones, which means they sometimes keep concerns to themselves. A calm, non-judgemental conversation can make all the difference. When children know that adults will listen first and act later, together with them, they are far more likely to reach out for help.

It is also helpful to set clear expectations around boundaries. Encourage your daughter to trust her instincts if a message or request feels uncomfortable. Let her know that she never needs to share personal details or continue a conversation she does not want to be part of. These are signs of maturity, not disrespect.

Reviewing privacy settings together can also reduce risks. Private accounts, careful selection of followers, and the habit of checking who can see posts give girls a stronger sense of control. Remind them, too, that sharing less information online protects their wellbeing in real and meaningful ways.

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Finally, girls benefit from balance - time offline, meaningful time with family, and moments away from screens. These pauses allow them to reflect on their digital experiences and develop resilience.

How ICS supports online safety

In school, we continue to teach digital literacy and citizenship, and responsible online behaviour. We encourage students to think critically about what they see online, to consider how their actions affect others, and to come to a trusted adult whenever they feel unsure. Our safeguarding team is always available to support students who experience online pressure or who are worried about something they have seen or received.

A Conversation Starter

If you would like to open a discussion at home, you might try asking:

"What kinds of things online make you feel confident, and what things make you feel uncomfortable or unsure?"

This simple question can lead to thoughtful conversations about identity, confidence, and digital wellbeing.

Final Thoughts

Girls and young women in our school community deserve to feel safe, respected, and empowered both online and offline. By working together - parents, staff, and students - we can help them develop the skills and confidence they need to navigate digital spaces with awareness and resilience.

If you have any concerns about your child's online experiences, please contact the safeguarding team. We are here to support your family.