

## Improving e-safety in primary schools

### Aims

This small-scale research aimed to identify effective measures for improving the internet safety awareness of children and teachers in primary schools in England. The schools subject to research had previously been identified as embodying good practice in regard to internet safety policy and practice.

### Key Findings

#### School policies

- The research revealed the importance of having a member of staff with a lead role in relation to e-safety in the preliminary stages of developing e-safety policies and programmes. The lead person should be someone with enough time to oversee e-safety and be IT literate.
- The development of an e-safety policy is crucial to improving internet safety in schools. The research showed that whilst schools were already using common sense in relation to any e-safety incidences that occurred, the development of a dedicated school policy had meant that any problems could be addressed quickly, with all members of staff being clear about what steps to take and if necessary who to escalate concerns to, seeing it as "*a set of guidelines to work to*".
- Schools should also take into account revisions to their Acceptable Use Policies, and consider the merits of them being updated on an annual basis so that any new digital concerns can be integrated. The case study schools pointed out the importance of this document being signed by pupils once a year, as well as it being sent home with an accompanying letter to support parents in keeping their children safe when using the internet at home.
- When implementing e-safety modifications schools may want to include a Staff User Agreement, which outlines what is appropriate and professional for staff in terms of their online behaviour. Both case study schools had implemented such an agreement, advising staff not to set social networking privacy settings so that pupils could access their accounts.

#### Filtering

- The case study schools advocated managed systems with fewer filters in place, as it was felt that they assisted children in managing online risks rather than avoiding them at school and being exposed to them elsewhere. One school spoke about their Managed Learning Environment (MLE) which included an area around e-safety where children could report anything they were unhappy about or uncertain of.

#### Internet safety education

- An online video by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) was used by both of the case study schools as part of their staff training, and was felt to have had a big impact in terms of embedding the issues around e-safety for primary school aged children. The case study schools both used the same CEOP video with their children as an e-safety starting point. Teachers from both schools felt the video had quite a strong message and children from both schools spoke about how they had made changes to their Facebook accounts after watching the video.

### Parents

- The case study schools felt that involving parents is incredibly important, as this helps to ensure the children receive a consistent message around e-safety. They attempted this through a number of methods such as drawing their attention to the new e-safety policy through newsletters, the school website and the prospectus, asking them to co-sign their child's Acceptable Use Policy document, and organising training sessions for parents.

### Policy Context

Research has demonstrated that children and young people are beginning to use the internet at younger ages. It is therefore important that primary schools are equipped with the knowledge to educate children on internet safety issues.

### Methodology

This small-scale qualitative research is based on two primary school case studies, carried out by the Centre for Education and Inclusion Research at Sheffield Hallam University, including initial telephone interviews with the head teacher and fieldwork visits which involved interviews with the head teacher and teacher with a lead in e-safety, other teaching staff and focus groups of children.

### Background

This research intended to identify good practice in raising awareness of internet safety issues in primary schools in England. Two schools were subject to research. These schools were considered to be more advanced in their internet safety awareness than most primary schools. The research sought to uncover what they had implemented, where they had been successful, and any barriers they had faced. The research took place in a large primary school in a city in the north of England (School A), and a small rural Church of England primary school in the south west (School B).

**Source** Centre for Education and Inclusion Research, Sheffield Hallam University (report published September 2011)

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