Alert 55: Online Friendships

In the News… In the news… In the news… In the news… In the news…

Alert: A report in the BBC news website on 18 September 2020 reveals an increase in young people seeking help from charities for issues relating to sharing of nude images online. It suggests that a lack of face-to-face contact during lockdown combined with young people spending a lot of time online, has contributed to the problem.

Gooseberry **Student** 'Discussion' of the week

Communicating with friends online can be great fun and a good way to keep in touch when we are unable to meet up face to face. Video chat can make our online interactions almost as good as meeting in person. However, there can be disadvantages.

Explore the topic:

- Who are safe people to communicate with online?
- What are the risks of communicating online with people you don't know in real life?
- What are the particular risks of video chat? *Think about revealing personal information, that videos can be screenshot or recorded, that people might not be who they say they are.*
- What sort of things should never be shared online? *Think about being kind, polite and about boundaries - not damaging your reputation or that of others.*

Activity: For younger children: Think about ways to respond to either contact from someone online that you don't know in real life.
For older children: Think about ways to resist pressure from someone online to behave inappropriately.

Gooseberry **Teacher** 'Thought' of the week

The growth in smart phone ownership and the prevalence of sexting means that for some children this has become normalised. Unfortunately, 11-14 year olds are some of the most vulnerable to online sexual exploitation. See this month's blog for more information. If you are subscribed to Gooseberry Play, you can use the following Gooseberry Planet scenarios:

Playground: Scenarios 1 People Online, 4 Fake Profiles and 7 Video Chat
Street: Scenario 1 People Online, Scenario 8 Chatting Online
Village: Scenarios 3 Webcam Wise, 5 Online Gaming, 9 Images
Town: Scenarios 1 Digital Footprint, 5 Video Chats, 9 Fake Profiles
City: Scenarios 3 Receiving Images, 5 Grooming, 8 Sending Images, 10 Video Chat

We have recently updated our games platform. It now has new content and digitised workbooks – no more printing costs and no more time spent marking!

Gooseberry **Parent** 'Message' of the week

Keeping an eye on what your child is up to online can be difficult, especially if they have been sent home from school and you are trying to work from home. For younger children, agree some ground rules about who they can communicate with online, how long they spend and where they use their devices. Remind them about only communicating with your permission and with people they know in real life. Ensuring that communication takes place in communal areas can avoid your child being manipulated by groomers. For older children, talk about boundaries in their behaviour online and the need to resist pressure from others who try to persuade them to behave inappropriately. Groomers can be adept at manipulating children – reassure them that you will be there to support them if they make a mistake. If your school subscribes to Gooseberry Planet, see our Video Chat Parent advice sheets for more information.

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