

E-SAFETY UPDATE



HALF TERMLY UPDATE

Welcome to our latest update! Lionheart Educational Trust is now sending out an e-safety update every half term, prior to the school holidays, in order to support parents and students. Due to the nature of widespread internet use at the moment, you will find this is a bumper edition this half-term, containing advice and support from a wider range of sources.

This update will feature resources by the National Online Safety organization and Childnet;

A FREE ONLINE SAFETY GUIDE ON LOOKING AFTER YOUR WELLBEING ONLINE

The online world and digital technology has become such a significant part of our lives – and integral to so many aspects of our daily routine – that we shouldn't be surprised at the degree of influence it can wield over what we think and how we feel. Many experiences that young people have on the internet are hugely positive and uplifting ... but sadly, that's not always the case.

Negative incidents online – such as disagreements with other users, stumbling across upsetting content or feeling left out by friends – can be intensely damaging to a child's emotional state. This poster has some useful tips for young people and trusted adults on how even small, simple actions can help to protect our wellbeing when we're on the internet.

A FREE ONLINE SAFETY GUIDE ON INFLUENCERS

The concept of influencers is hardly a new one. Through newspaper columns and TV spots, we've long been accustomed to hearing informed opinion from, say, Martin Lewis on money, Nigella Lawson on food or Mark Kermode on cinema. How the digital revolution has changed the game, however, is by providing a plethora of platforms from which literally anyone can have their say.

Online, you'll find hordes of people holding forth on any number of topics: gaming, beauty, travel, fashion, fitness ... virtually anything you can think of. What qualifies them as 'experts', however? Is it safe for young people to consume the oceans of content that they generate? This guide brings you the essential info on the influencer phenomenon.

A FREE ONLINE SAFETY GUIDE ON AI VIRTUAL FRIENDS

Artificial intelligence is probably the hot topic in technology circles right now, with questions being raised worldwide about how AI might conceivably affect the very future of the human race. In the short term, however – definitely as far as its impact on young people is concerned – the clearest risk is almost certainly the AI-powered 'virtual friends' which are springing up all over the internet.

There's Replika and Kuki, for instance, while Snapchat has recently got in on the act with My AI – and search engines like Bing and Google have developed their own versions. Are these machine intelligences suitable online companions for young people? What are their limitations and weak spots? This guide profiles the emergence of AI 'virtual friends'.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS ON WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CHATGPT

Chat GPT is an artificial intelligence chatbot which can be found online. It generates content and answers based on a user's question. This guide is a copy from one of Childnet's recent blog posts outlining what parents and carers need to know about ChatGPT.

Looking After Your WELLBEING ONLINE

We all know that taking care of our minds and bodies is essential to keep us feeling happy and healthy. The thing is, we spend so much of our time online these days that it's also important that we remember to look after ourselves in the digital world, too. Our poster has got some simple but useful tips for supporting your wellbeing while you're gaming, on social media or just using the internet.



TAKE CARE
WHAT YOU
SHARE!



CHECK YOUR
PRIVACY
SETTINGS



AVOID
COMPARING
YOURSELF TO
OTHERS



TRACK YOUR
SCREEN TIME



TAKE
BREAKS



REPORT
INAPPROPRIATE
CONTENT



PAUSE
BEFORE
YOU POST



BLOCK
BULLIES



SPEAK UP AGAINST
HARMFUL BEHAVIOUR



STAY
ACTIVE
OFFLINE



BE KIND &
BE CAREFUL



National
Online
Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday



GO TECH FREE
BEFORE BED



LOOK FOR POSITIVE COMMUNITIES

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about INFLUENCERS

In today's digital age, social media influencers play an increasingly significant role in shaping the opinions, interests and behaviours of our children. While many of these individuals can have a positive effect, influencer culture can also present certain risks – such as encouraging consumerism, affecting self-esteem and blurring trustworthiness. To help ensure a safe online environment for young people, it's vital to maintain open communication, set sensible boundaries, promote a healthy self-image and teach digital media literacy. Our guide delves deeper into all of these.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

HEIGHTENED CONSUMERISM

A major way that influencers make money is through brand partnerships and sponsored content. As a result, children who follow them may be exposed to a steady stream of advertising: this can lead to materialistic attitudes, unrealistic expectations and an increased desire to have the latest products. Many influencers have built huge brand empires around their large, impressionable following.

THE SOFT SELL

Some influencers aren't always transparent about the motivations behind their posts, blurring the lines between genuine recommendations and paid-for promotions – and young people sometimes find it difficult to distinguish authentic content from advertising. Many major social platforms have taken steps to make sponsored content and ads easier to identify, but it remains an area of concern.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Inspired by their favourite influencers, children may start sharing more of their own lives online – which could reveal personal information or details about their daily routine. This openness can put them at risk of cyberbullying or even predatory behaviour. This is exacerbated by live streaming, which gives young people no time to consider the potential consequences of saying too much.

UNDERMINING SELF-ESTEEM

Many influencers share images and videos of themselves and their activities, which are often painstakingly curated and edited to present an idealised version of their life. Children who follow these influencers may develop distorted expectations about body image and the concept of beauty, which can potentially lead to negative self-esteem and even mental health issues.

Advice for Parents & Carers

KEEP TALKING

Chat to your child about the content they consume on social media and the influencers that they like. Encourage them to think critically about what they see and hear online, and listen to any concerns they might have. Maintaining this line of open, honest communication can help your child to make informed decisions about which individuals they follow and what content they engage with.

SET SOME BOUNDARIES

Agree age-appropriate boundaries for your child's social media use, including time limits and privacy settings (the two major operating systems on mobile devices, Android and iOS, have these controls baked in). Try to keep an eye on your child's online activity and discuss it regularly with them – including reminding them of the potential risks that can arise from following influencers.

SUPPORT A HEALTHY SELF-IMAGE

Reinforce your child's awareness that real life isn't usually as picture perfect as it may appear on social media – and how some content (particularly that of influencers) is often curated, staged or edited to look more glamorous. If possible, highlight examples of other influencers who share authentic, relatable material which acknowledges their imperfections and struggles as well.

PROMOTE MEDIA LITERACY

Talk to your child about the concepts of sponsored content, advertising and potential influencer bias. Teach them to critically evaluate the information they're presented with online and to consider the possible reasons behind content creation. This can help young people develop the skills to make healthier decisions about the influencers they choose to follow and the content they consume.

Meet Our Expert

A former director of digital learning and currently a deputy headmaster and DSL, Brendan O'Keeffe's experience and expertise gives him a clear insight into how modern digital systems impact the experience of children, staff and parents – and which strategies help to ensure that the online world remains a useful educational tool rather than a minefield of risks.



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about AI VIRTUAL FRIENDS

Artificial intelligence – particularly in terms of how it generates natural language – has seen significant development over the last six months, with companies releasing new AI-based software or adding an AI element to existing apps (such as Snapchat, for example). One form of AI to become especially popular has been the ‘AI friend’ or chatbot, as children eagerly experiment with these new-found computer-generated companions. There are now numerous apps available with this ‘virtual friend’ functionality, with the likelihood of it being added to other successful platforms soon.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AI chatbots may not always be able to recognise when content is age inappropriate or harmful and should be filtered out. So there’s a possibility that children could be exposed to offensive language or explicit material while conversing with their virtual friend. The companies producing such AI solutions are also unlikely to take responsibility for any content that their algorithms generate.

D@*#!

REDUCED SOCIAL CONTACT

An excessive reliance on chatbots for social interaction could potentially cause a child to begin reducing the amount of face-to-face communication they have, leading to social isolation. If young people become dependent on chatbots to provide companionship, it could very likely hinder the development of their real-life social skills.

LACK OF SENSITIVITY

Chatbot software isn’t always sophisticated enough to pick up on subtle emotional cues or recognise signs of distress in children, as most humans would. It might therefore fail to respond appropriately. AI misinterpreting what it’s being told or replying insensitively to a young user who’s already struggling could potentially impact a child’s emotional wellbeing or exacerbate any existing emotional issues.

UNINTENTIONAL BIAS

AI companions are only as reliable as the information they’ve been programmed with. The algorithms they use, therefore, may unintentionally promote bias, stereotypes or discriminatory behaviour (as many originate from the USA or the UK, for instance, they can display a distinctly western-centric worldview). This could lead to children developing skewed attitudes and behaviours.

COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS

Although many are now undeniably advanced, AI-powered chatbots still have limitations in terms of understanding complex concepts, context and nuance. Depending heavily on chatbots to help with learning or solving problems may stunt the development of a child’s own powers of critical thinking, creativity and ability to engage in open-ended discussions with other people.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Chatbots typically collect data about users, including personal information and conversations. This is ostensibly to improve their performance as they gradually learn about our behaviour – but many experts are warning that there may be significant risks associated with how this information is stored and used (the possibility of potential breaches or misuse by third parties, for instance).

Advice for Parents & Carers

CHAT ABOUT CHATBOTS

If your child is already expressing an interest in AI apps, a relaxed, natural chat should help you to discover which ones they’re aware of and how they’re using them (or are planning to). Discuss these options with your child and perhaps do your own research to ensure you think they’re suitable. Once you’re totally happy, you could sit with your young one and begin exploring AI chatbots together.

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

If your child is keen to engage with AI chatbots, encourage them to do so in a safe environment: ideally in a shared space at home, so you can easily keep an eye and ear on their progress. Set up appropriate content filtering measures in advance – and gently remind them that you’ll be close by and ready to help with any questions or concerns that may arise.

FIND A BALANCE

Work alongside your child to establish the right balance in terms of how they might use AI-powered chatbots – and when it’s appropriate. It’s important to make sure that children are still getting plenty of opportunities to learn to solve problems for themselves, as well as building their interpersonal skills through face-to-face conversations with friends, family members and teachers.

TAKE CONTROL

As with any form of app or game, when it comes to AI chatbots we’d strongly recommend that you consider employing parental controls (either on the device being used or within the software itself) to manage which apps your child can download and use. This is particularly important for younger children, who may be more at risk of being upset or frightened by inappropriate content.

RECOGNISE THE RISKS

It’s unlikely that most children will have even considered the potential risks attached to having a virtual companion. So it’s probably wise to explain some of the possible hazards and challenges of AI chatbots to your child. In particular, emphasise that AI isn’t a real person (however much it might sound like one) and may occasionally tell them something that isn’t entirely impartial or accurate.

Meet Our Expert

A Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), Gary Henderson is the Director of IT at a large boarding school in the UK, having previously taught in schools and colleges in Britain and the Middle East. With a particular interest in digital citizenship and cyber security, he believes it is essential that we become more aware of the risks around technology, as well as the benefits.



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What do I need to know about ChatGPT? A guide for parents and carers

25 April 2023



Launched on 30th November 2022, ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence chatbot which can be found online. Similarly to a robotic customer service often found on the corner of a website or app, ChatGPT generates content and answers based on a user's question.

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

We're coming up to a quarter of the way through the 21st century, and AI is all around us, even if we may not realise it.

Every time you open your phone with Face ID, click on a personalised advert online, or ask your device about the weather – you are engaging with and receiving information from AI.

Over the years, AI has become smarter in terms of listening, learning, and solving problems – all while drawing on a massive database of information.

How do I use ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is hosted online, it is available as both a desktop application and can be accessed on a web browser.

There is no set minimum age restriction for using ChatGPT, but it requires you to sign in with an email address and to accept the site terms and conditions before you begin using it.

On ChatGPT you can type in a question or topic that you'd like to learn more about. For example, you could ask "What is the tallest mountain in the world?"

You can have multiple ongoing conversations which you can revisit, and ChatGPT uses information you have given it in the chat to tailor each answer it gives.

This is different to other chat bots where answers are limited to each question rather than the chain of questions and information as a whole.

ChatGPT gets its data from a variety of sources on the internet, such as websites, books, and other documents.

ChatGPT		
Examples	Capabilities	Limitations
"Explain quantum computing in simple terms" →	Remembers what user said earlier in the conversation	May occasionally generate incorrect information
"Got any creative ideas for a 10 year old's birthday?" →	Allows user to provide follow-up corrections	May occasionally produce harmful instructions or biased content
"How do I make an HTTP request in Javascript?" →	Trained to decline inappropriate requests	Limited knowledge of world and events after 2021

Image courtesy of ChatGPT

What ChatGPT can do

Whether you work in code, struggling with a calculation, or looking to translate something into another language, ChatGPT can provide answers. It can write content for a website, draft emails, write poetry in a particular style – and much more.

We asked ChatGPT about what it can do and it gave the below examples:

How we collect data



Conversations may be reviewed by our AI trainers to improve our systems.



Please don't share any sensitive information in your conversations.

Image courtesy of ChatGPT

What ChatGPT can't do

Whilst there are so many possibilities when using AI, there are also some vital limitations that mean that it's unlikely we'll all be replaced by a robot any time soon.

In fact, we asked ChatGPT what its limitations are, and it gave us a complete response which is outlined below. Whilst you're reading it, do you think you'd be able to spot that a bot wrote this, and not a human being?

Firstly, I'm not capable of understanding things the way humans do. I can analyze text and recognize patterns, but I don't have the same kind of intuition or emotions that people have.

Secondly, I rely on the information that's available to me. This means that if I haven't been trained on a certain topic or concept, I might not be able to provide accurate or helpful responses.

Thirdly, I'm not always able to understand context or nuance. Sometimes, the same word or phrase can have different meanings depending on the situation or the tone of the conversation.

Lastly, I'm not perfect and I do make mistakes sometimes. I'm constantly learning and improving, but there are still things that I might not know or understand.

Safety considerations about ChatGPT

Inappropriate content

If you are considering using ChatGPT with young people it is important to note that some conversations may not be appropriate for young people.

At Childnet we recommend having a conversation with your child about the use of any new apps, website or services, this can include discussing the content they may come across and the strategies they can use if something or someone worries or upsets them online.

By maintaining an open dialogue with your child and encouraging them to talk to you about their internet use, you can help them to access the amazing resources the internet has to offer whilst keeping them safe online.

You may decide to monitor your child's interactions with ChatGPT depending on their age, or suggest only using the service whilst you are together as a family. There are also [parental controls](#) you can enable if you would rather your child not be interacting with it.

You could also create a [family agreement](#) to outline key decisions such as who can use ChatGPT, where in the house this can be accessed and what kind of questions your child can ask.

Reliability of information

Everybody should be reminded to think carefully about the information they are presented with when online.

They should consider its source, compare it with what they already know to be true, ask questions, form judgements and check with others if they are unclear.

As ChatGPT has told us itself, there is no guarantee that the software will provide accurate or helpful responses.

If you're a parent or carer, we recommend going through our webpage about [reliability online](#) with your child – it talks about the many different types of inaccurate information that critical thinking can help to address.

Using ChatGPT responsibly

ChatGPT is a programme that can do many things. However, sometimes, people might use it in a negative way, for instance asking the service to write essays for



homework instead of writing their themselves.

It's important for parents and carers to talk with young people about how to use ChatGPT in a educational and safe way.

A way to go about this conversation is talk to them about how they can use ChatGPT positively: to ask questions and learn more about a topic they are interested in, or to practice their writing skills by getting feedback on their writing from ChatGPT. This can be a useful way to improve their critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and creativity.