EARLY YEARS - ONLINE SAFETY – GUIDE FOR PARENTS

We all play an essential role in helping young children learn the foundations of safe online behaviour. Children are naturally curious in understanding the world we live in; it is all our responsibility to enable them to do so, including helping them to recognise the value of technology and how to use it safely. Role modelling safe use of the internet should become part of everyday life.

Ofcom's 'Children and Parents Media Use and Attitudes Report' (2018 – released in January 2019) found that:

- *1% of 3-4-year olds have their own smartphone and 19% have their own tablet*
- *52% of 3-4-year olds go online for an average of nearly 9 hours a week*
- *45% of 3-4-year olds use YouTube*

Children should be helped (at a level appropriate to their age and ability) to share online concerns with you. In turn it is vital that parents know where to express their concerns or ask for help (see end of this document).

Children could be at risk of…

CONTENT *(what they may see):*

- Exposure to inappropriate videos. pictures or messages which might upset, worry or frighten them
- Imitating harmful or inappropriate behaviour they see online
- Searching for inappropriate content on purpose or stumbling upon it by accident. This would include using voice activated tools to search for content
- Inadvertently giving apps or websites permission to share their location or other personal information
- Spending real money via in-app or in-game purchases

CONTACT *(who might communicate with them):*

- Being abused online (including sexually) by people they don't know, such as when gaming or using video chat
- Being abused online (including sexually) by people they know, such as friends and family members
- Sending images or information to people on the device's contact list

CONDUCT *(how they might behave):*

- Exhibiting unhealthy behaviours and boundaries around their use of screens
- Being unkind to each other online as well as offline; this could be using mean words or by excluding others from their games
- Using words or terminology which are not appropriate for their age
- Engaging in unhealthy relationships
- As part of natural development, early years children may exhibit curiosity about their own and others' private body parts; if this occurs via technology children may be at risk of taking inappropriate or indecent images and videos of themselves – the Brook traffic light tool can help practitioners to determine whether sexual behaviour is normal healthy sexual development or harmful behaviour which is a cause for concern.

STRATEGIES TO MINIMISE RISK INCLUDE:

- Check apps, websites and search results before using them with children.
- Children should always be supervised when accessing the internet.
- Ensure safety modes and filters are applied - default settings tend not to ensure a high level of privacy or security. But remember you still need to supervise children closely.
- Role model safe behaviour and privacy awareness. Talk to children about safe use, for example ask permission before taking your child's picture and sending/uploading it electronically.
- Check privacy settings to make sure personal data is not being shared inadvertently or inappropriately.

Resources for Parents/Carers:

⇒ AskAboutGames: Supporting families with video games
⇒ Childnet: Keeping under-fives safe online
⇒ Internet Matters: Guidance for parents of pre-schoolers
⇒ London Grid for Learning: Portal linking to various resources on parental engagement around online safety
⇒ NSPCC: Guidance for parents on keeping children safe online
⇒ Parent Zone: Digital Parenting magazine
⇒ Parent Info
⇒ Thinkuknow: Guidance and information for parents/carers from NCA-CEOP
⇒ St Mary's Pre-school Designated Safeguarding Lead: TINA HILLSON
⇒ St Mary's Pre-school Designated Deputy Officer: LOUISE HARRINGTON