Dalmain Primary School

4 June 2020

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Online safety / activities Newsletter No 9

Well here we are: newsletter no 9! I hope you are all keeping safe & well and managing in these strange and changeable times. If you have any questions you would like to ask about your child's time online or their safety online, please email us on admin@dalmain.lewisham.sch.uk.

This week the newsletter contains more of Thinkuknow's online e-safety lessons. I have also included some fun online activities to help fill those "I'm bored moments"; these have the added bonus of building your child's online resilience at the same time as being fun.

Thinkuknow home activity packs

Thinkuknow has released its sixth Online Safety at Home pack. This is now available with new activities for you to use at home with their children. I have put the links below for you.

Home activity packs for ages 4-5
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/globalassets/thinkuknow/documents/thinkuknow/parents/pdf/thinkuknow-4-5s-home-activity-sheet-6.pdf

Home activity packs for ages 5-7
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/globalassets/thinkuknow/documents/thinkuknow/parents/pdf/thinkuknow-5-7s-home-activity-sheet-6.pdf

Home activity packs for ages 8-10
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/globalassets/thinkuknow/documents/thinkuknow/parents/pdf/thinkuknow-8-10s-home-activity-sheet-6.pdf

Home activity packs for ages 11-13
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/globalassets/thinkuknow/documents/thinkuknow/parents/pdf/thinkuknow-11-13s-home-activity-sheet-6.pdf

Six fun online activities to boost your child's digital resilience

The COVID-19 outbreak has increased our reliance on technology, and with that change have come fears that online risks are also growing – particularly for children. But while it's true that things can occasionally go wrong online, most children only have positive experiences when using the internet.

Even 20 years ago, the quarantine experience would have looked quite different, without the many benefits technology brings. As classrooms, offices and entertainment find their new online place in our lives, families have been embracing all things digital.

Here, then, are some fun online activities your child can enjoy during lockdown which will also help boost their digital resilience.

Learn to code

Coding is a fantastic skill to have. It helps develop your child's numeracy, communication and problem solving skills, while giving them a greater understanding of the technology around them. This in turn boosts their digital resilience.

While your child may have already been learning basic coding skills at school, there are some great online resources to continue their development.

Codemonkey, ScratchJr and Cargo-Bot are among some of the best coding platforms for children in primary school. All are free, some with paid-for extras. Your child can learn basic coding through games, quizzes and storytelling – a great way to engage younger pupils.

If you have older children, then these are recommend: Minecraft: Education Edition, CodeCombat, or HTML Dog and Khan Academy – although there are plenty more to choose from. You're probably already familiar with Minecraft thanks to the popular video game and the educational version was recently made free worldwide until June.

Take a virtual museum tour

Much-loved museums have closed their doors to the public since the outbreak – but thanks to technology, we can still visit them virtually around the world, for free.

Spanning London, Amsterdam and New York, the British Museum, the Charles Dickens Museum, the Rijksmuseum and the Guggenheim are among those offering online tours.

Your child (or the whole family) can take an online stroll through history from the safety of your home. As well as being a great source of education and entertainment giving your child the freedom to explore these safer sites will help build their digital resilience.

Have a video chat

Video chatting has enjoyed a rise in popularity as we use it to socialise from the safety of our homes. For children cut off from normal social interaction, it offers a great way to connect with close friends or to 'hang out' in a larger group. It also provides mental-health benefits, as it can ease the sense of loneliness that can come from being stuck in isolation.

There are plenty of video-chatting platforms to choose from. Zoom and Houseparty are two of the most popular, particularly among young people. Zoom allows unlimited numbers to connect, while Houseparty allows up to eight guests per room. Other social media platforms have also jumped on the video-chatting bandwagon, most recently WhatsApp with its eight-participant update.

While video chatting can generally be viewed as a safe online activity, if carried out with known friends and families, risks still remain. For example, Zoom has seen incidents of 'zoombombings' where an unidentified person(s) joins a video call. The platform has recently added encryption and new privacy settings in a bid to counter such attacks. Houseparty, meanwhile, can connect a user with someone they don't already know, via its friend-of-a-friend feature.

There are plenty of ways that you can make your child's video-chatting experience safer, though. For a start, we'd recommend that your child always sets a password for video calls, where possible, and that you make sure they are using the correct privacy settings.

Younger children should be supervised while they are video-chatting, and teenagers should be encouraged to think about how they use these apps – and how they're different from, say, a phone call.

Try to look at this period as a useful opportunity for your child to learn about online safety. Chat with them about the possible risks. Recovering from an experience when things go wrong online is a key part of building your child's digital resilience, so be open about potential risks and educate yourselves on where to report any problems.

I have covered Houseparty, online chat safety and where to report any problems in previous newsletters; please refer back to these if you need to do so.

Play Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp

Nintendo recently released Animal Crossing: New Horizons for the Nintendo Switch, which was reviewed by Parent Zone online as "overwhelmingly positive". Great as it is, the game comes with a rather high price tag. What's more, not everyone owns a Nintendo Switch – and they're currently very difficult to get hold of.

Fortunately, New Horizons isn't the only Animal Crossing game currently available. Animal Crossing: Pocket Camp is Nintendo's 2017 smartphone version, free to download on iOS and Android, although it does offer in-app purchases.

It follows the same basic principles as New Horizons, teaching important lessons of data protection, patience and responsibility. Its friendly community and slow-paced, often-realistic world will boost your child's empathy online, which is an important part of building digital resilience.

Take some cooking classes on Instagram

Anyone on Instagram can create their own IGTV channel, where they can share videos with their followers. During lockdown, several celebrities and brands have created their own cooking-in-quarantine tutorials to help families keep mealtimes exciting.

The popular video network Tastemade is a good place to start: it covers a variety of cuisines to suit all tastes and budgets, and its easy-to-follow tutorials are ideal for getting the whole family involved. With a little help, your child will be able to cook up a feast of easy, delicious recipes using simple ingredients, which will encourage healthy eating and an appreciation of the food on your table.

You can access IGTV through Instagram's search function, where you will find the 'IGTV' button underneath the search bar. Or you can search for an individual profile and click on the IGTV symbol at the top of their feed.

With its easy search function and array of videos, Instagram's IGTV will improve your child's online independence, while teaching them to be cautious of the content available, and to always think before they share. This is an important part of digital resilience.

It's important for your child to understand when they are at risk online, and feel confident enough to seek help if something goes wrong. A key to building digital resilience is by parents minimising control of children's online habits – while at the same time taking an active interest in what they enjoy and offering advice and support should they need it.

For more cooking tutorials, Outschool offers a useful schedule of up-and-coming online cookery classes for children.

Start a blog

The minimum age to use most blogging platforms is **13**, and with good reason. You and your child should consider what they are writing and who they are sharing it with. You should also decide whether you want others to be able to comment on your child's blog: if it's open to all, they may receive negative or even abusive messages. **If you are considering letting your child blog then why not do a shared family one, where everyone in the family has input?**

Online blogging provides a great opportunity to explore self-expression and creativity, while also promoting learning and building friendships. Your child might also find that writing a blog in the form of a lockdown diary might help them make sense of their emotions during this confusing time. There are plenty of blogging platforms to choose from to suit your child's needs. The most popular choices are WordPress and Blogger, but there are others your child can get stuck into, such as Medium and Tumblr.

With different features on each platform ranging from website customisation to photos and animated GIF images, your child has access to an array of tools for expression, and the freedom to write as they wish.

Through blogging, your child will have the opportunity to learn about the risks that come with sharing information and become more thoughtful about their screen habits as they disclose their thoughts and interests to their followers. Striking the balance between self-expression and oversharing can be tricky to achieve – blogging may help them to do just that.

Many children will be finding lockdown life frustrating, but if they can use this time to build their digital resilience, some good will at least come out of it. And if they can have fun while doing so, that's a further bonus.

As always, please remember:
If you're worried that a child is at risk of harm online, you should call the police. Children can make a report to CEOP at https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/.

If you have any concerns at all as well as reporting them online, please alert us to them as well so we can look into them / investigate any site issues, this will help us safeguard other children and possibly alert other parents to potential issues. Please email us at admin@dalmain.lewisham.sch.uk

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Woodhall
Safeguarding & Behaviour Lead