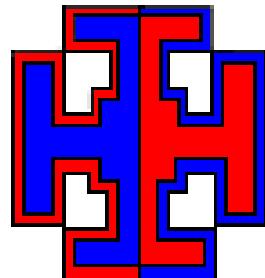


**Online Safety for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities  
(SEND)**



St. Chad's Catholic School

2024 - 2025

### **Our Mission Statement**

**At St Chad's we grow in the light of Christ, to share his love and reflect the gospel values**

#### **What is different for learners with SEND?**

The internet and technology are an integral part of everyday life for children. It is important that we acknowledge the positive opportunities the internet provides for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); the accessibility of images and video online make it an excellent learning tool, whilst global connectivity enables children with SEND to socialise and access support.

However, children with SEND are more likely than their peers to experience online issues such as cyberbullying, online grooming and exploitation. Similarly, children with SEND are more likely to have their internet use restricted and therefore have limited opportunities to learn through experience, develop resilience or seek support, which would empower them to use technology safely.

Online safety is a fundamental part of our safeguarding responsibilities and education settings should implement a range of targeted and differentiated strategies to enable learners with SEND to access the internet safely and appropriately.

#### **Online safety messages**

For some learners, the use of abstract language and concepts can lead to confusion, frustration and misunderstandings. It is important that we work together with our children to build and develop a collaborative understanding of the terminology being used.

We must consider:

- What does the term 'online predator' mean to a child with SEND? Is it a dangerous person or a wild animal?
- Is an online contact still a stranger if you know their name or they send a 'friend request'?
- If you must never share personal information online, how do you tell online shops where to deliver your orders?

- That there are usually exceptions to rules which can sometimes be difficult for children with SEND to accept; therefore we must ensure the 'rules' we provide are clear, consistent and not left open to interpretation.

Examples:

- A child who finds it difficult to understand abstract meaning may not be able to interpret hidden messages or metaphors in many popular video resources.
- Instead of saying: "Don't share personal information online", use a more realistic statement: "Always ask an adult you trust, before sharing personal information online".

## **Education and training**

Online safety education is delivered in an age and context appropriate way, based on learner needs and experiences. Staff establish what learners already know about online safety and how much experience or exposure they have had to the online environment.

Mrs Parker, our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Mrs Wheatley our SENCo and one of our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (Deputy DSL) access appropriate training and guidance regarding the specific online risks for learners with SEND (Annex B, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018).

Many learners with SEND will want to engage in the same activities as their peers, but may lack the understanding, skills or support to do so safely. Staff at St. Chad's, with the support of parents/carers, implement a small step approach to online access, enabling learners to develop experiences and build resilience in the online environment.

Online safety education does not just take place within computing lessons but also forms part of an embedded and progressive curriculum, including appropriate PSHE and Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)

When teaching about online safety, learners with SEND may need:

- Complex online safety issues to be broken down and explained in greater detail;
- To explore issues in a variety of contexts and approaches;
- More examples of safe and unsafe practices;

- Constant reinforcement and repetition of key safety messages;
- Differentiated teaching resources and materials.

Visual resources and verbal support may be used with children with SEND, but some children may respond better to multi-media content such as videos, interactive presentations, screensavers or spoken/ sound recordings that they can associate with 'good' or 'bad' decisions. Staff use a variety of resources and see what works or they adapt and use more suitable alternatives.

### **Acceptable use:**

St. Chad's provide clear boundaries and expectations for appropriate internet use for all staff, learners and parents; however, the way in which we communicate these 'rules' to learners with SEND may need to be adapted. Some learners with SEND may intentionally test boundaries and contravene the rules;

Parents/carers play a vital role in supporting their children learn how to be safe online. Staff will endeavour to support parents/carers;

- To understand the risks online and how to access support;
- To know how to talk about online safety and support their child in accessing the internet safely;
- By sharing key online safety messages that are taught to pupils in school.

A child with SEND is likely to be vulnerable both on and offline, so we encourage parents to adopt similar mechanisms for supporting their child online, as they use in the 'real' world.

### **Examples:**

- Do not assume that a child is not physically or mentally capable of accessing the internet, ALWAYS implement blocks or filters;
- A parent may be frightened that their child will be an easy target online, so bans internet access. This restricts the child's ability to learn and develop online resilience;
- Don't assume that a child, who is very technology literate, knows how to keep themselves safe, always actively discuss online safety rules.

Both professionals and parents should take an active interest in children with SEND online activities and talk to them regularly about what they do online. Creating an open and positive dialogue about technology will encourage learners to speak to an adult if something negative happens online.

## **Policies and procedures**

The DSL works with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and other appropriate staff, to develop and review the online safeguarding policies, ensuring the specific needs and requirements of learners with SEND are met. If staff identify individual children with specific online safety concerns, this may be incorporated into their Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.

## **Technology and infrastructure**

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (KCSIE) 2018 states that education settings should "ensure appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place". Education settings should also be careful that "over blocking" does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regards to online teaching and safeguarding."

What is deemed "appropriate" will depend on the specific needs, abilities and vulnerabilities of the children.

## **Reporting concerns**

Staff at St. Chad's are conscious that, children with SEND may require a range of methods to enable them to report concerns and seek support.

Some children with SEND may find it difficult to explain or describe things that have happened online; children might find it easier to show adults what they did, whilst others may not actually know how something happened. Careful investigation by DSLs may be required with support as appropriate from technical staff.

Teaching staff highlight external reporting systems, such as the CEOP report button to ensure that children understand when it would and wouldn't be appropriate to contact them.

**Date of this policy October 2024**

Kathryn Wheatley SENCo, Deputy DSL, SLT

This policy has been approved and adopted by the Governing Body.

**Policy Review**

This policy is to be reviewed annually.

Next Review Date July 2025