Brookfield School

A brief guide to keeping your child safe online.

Welcome back and hope you've had a wonderful Summer break.

What do we know about Group Chats?

Online messaging on apps, social media and online games are some of the most popular ways in which children connect. It can be a great way to share experiences, stories, memes and where friendships can flourish. However they can come with a number of risks.

Unknown people in the chat group.

Children often can't control who is added to a group which can lead to privacy concerns. Sharing personal details in group chats can be dangerous, and children have no control over what others do with the material they send. Some members of the chat might even decide to use such information maliciously.

Exclusion and Isolation

Exclusion in group chats is common and can take several forms. Sometimes a new group is created specifically to leave one child out on purpose. In other cases, the chat may happen on an app that a child doesn't have access to, making it impossible for them to join in. This can cause feelings of being left out— even unintentionally,

Bullying

Children of all ages are keen to fit in socially, and online group chats can sometimes complicate that process. Jokes at someone's expense or children grouping together to target another in the chat can intensify the emotional impact, adding to embarrassment, anxiety and feelings of isolation for the child being targeted.

Inappropriate content

Group chats may include inappropriate language or imagery. Even if a child isn't actively participating in the conversation, they may still be exposed to this content simply by being part of the group. Some apps have disappearing messaging features, where content is only available once or for a few seconds, which makes it harder for children to report something they've seen.

Peer Pressure

Children may feel that have to constantly stay engaged just to be included and keep up with the conversation. In some cases, they might partake in inappropriate behaviour like sharing explicit photos, jokes or teasing just to fit in. Group settings can also encourage children to act in ways they normally wouldn't , or stay silent when they know something is wrong. Some children may find it difficult to leave toxic group chats.

So what can we do...?

Help children consider how people might feel if they behave unkindly. Acknowledge that mistakes can happen but help them understand empathy and apologise for their mistakes. Encourage children to learn how to block and report inappropriate content. Make sure children know its ok to leave a group chat if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Finally, reassure your child that they can confide in you should they see something upsetting whilst online. Validate their feelings and discuss with them positive ways to handle different situations.

Lets make sure that all children feel safe whilst online.

Mr R Elson
Techie Tips!