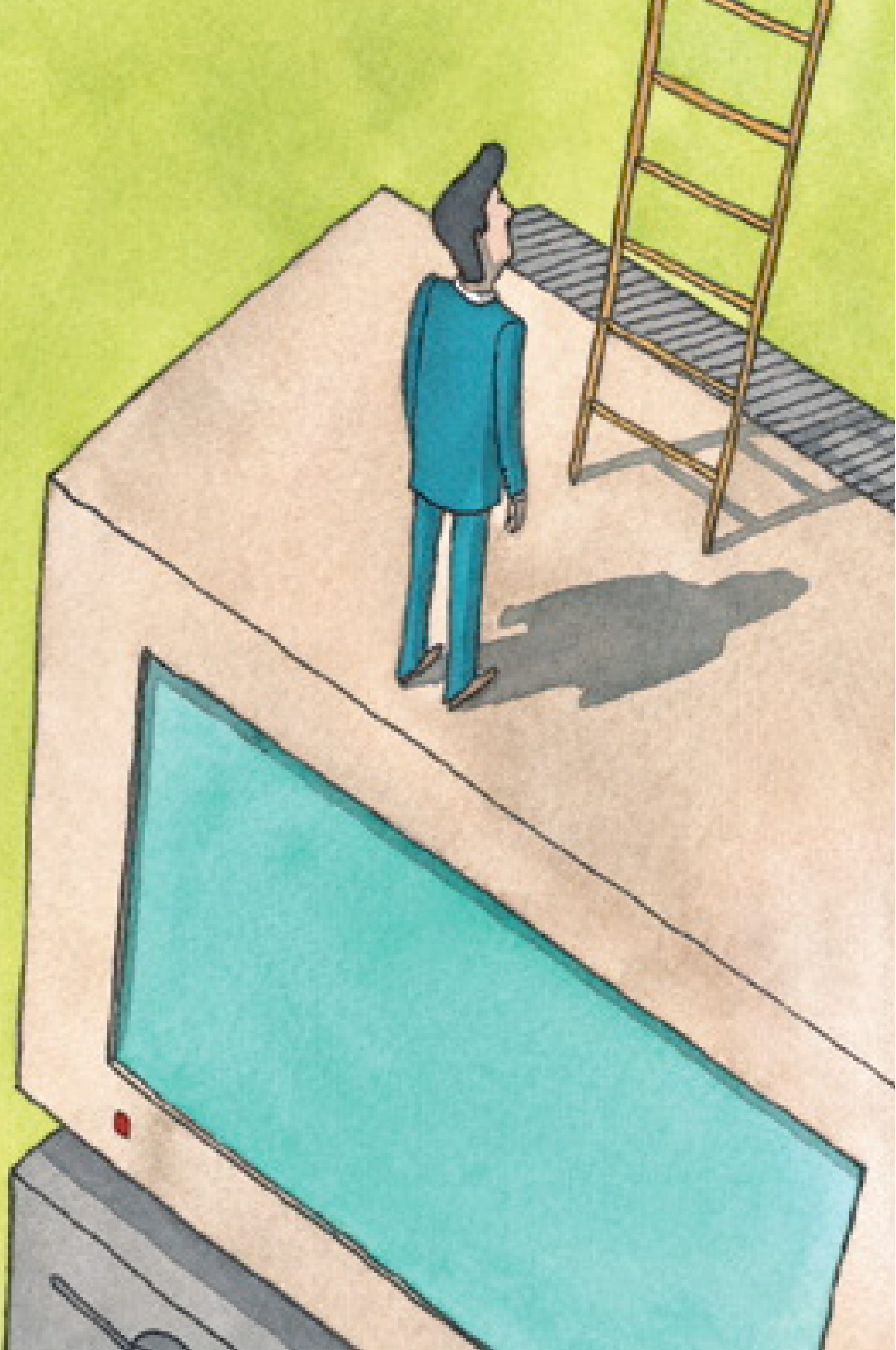


your safety net

exploring the issues of safe learning on the Internet

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers







ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

The Internet is an exciting gateway to knowledge and new experiences. However, its greatest strength – that anyone with an Internet connection can view, or create information on every subject imaginable – is also its greatest weakness. The Internet is not controlled by any organisation and the standard of information varies wildly according to its source. The purpose of this booklet is to explore how the Internet can be effectively and safely used to aid teaching and learning. There is a huge amount of excellent information and advice about this issue, and this booklet will guide you towards the best available resources.

More than 99 per cent of schools are now connected to the Internet^A, but they often resist anything but tightly controlled and limited Internet use^B. They fear the encounters students may have on-line; the information they may access; the people they may virtually 'meet'; or the harm they may cause to a computer by downloading a virus. If students are prevented from exploring the Internet, however, they are less likely to reap its educational and social benefits.

Clearly, the solution lies in 'striking the right balance' – protecting young people from risk while empowering them to use the Internet effectively and productively. So while this booklet's main focus is the promotion of Internet safety in schools and colleges, a section offering ideas for effective and productive Internet use for teaching and learning is also included.

Section one, '**Introducing the Internet**', offers a general introduction to the nature and capabilities of the Internet. If you have more than a basic understanding of the medium, you may prefer to skip straight to section two, '**Using the Internet in your teaching**', where you will find ideas and examples for effective use of the Internet in teaching and learning. Section three, '**Internet safety**', outlines the harmful elements of the Internet, and considers various options to enable educators to protect students.

It's clear that the future will bring new opportunities and challenges for education. Section four, '**Looking to the future**', examines the rapidly changing technological environment and suggests new issues that may arise over coming years.

This booklet is an introduction rather than a complete guide to the myriad of issues that relate to Internet safety. Throughout, you will find 'signposts' to websites offering more information about the issues under consideration and section five, '**Further information**', lists many useful contacts and resources. So rather than seeing this resource as a 'guide to Internet safety', please regard it as a gateway to the many sources of advice and information you can access to ensure safe and effective Internet use in your work.

^A Statistical First Release, **Information and Communications Technology in England: 2002 (Provisional)**. (August 2002)

^B Sonia Livingstone, '**Online freedom and safety for children**' IPPR/Citizens Online, 2001. London: The Stationery Office.

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INTRODUCING THE INTERNET

The Internet is a huge network of computers: a worldwide community with millions of members, providing a vast store of information with great possibilities for education.

Like any developing medium, Internet usage is associated with a whole new 'language' which users need to familiarise themselves with. If you come across terminology you are not familiar with, an excellent glossary of terms can be found on the BBC website www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/askbruce.

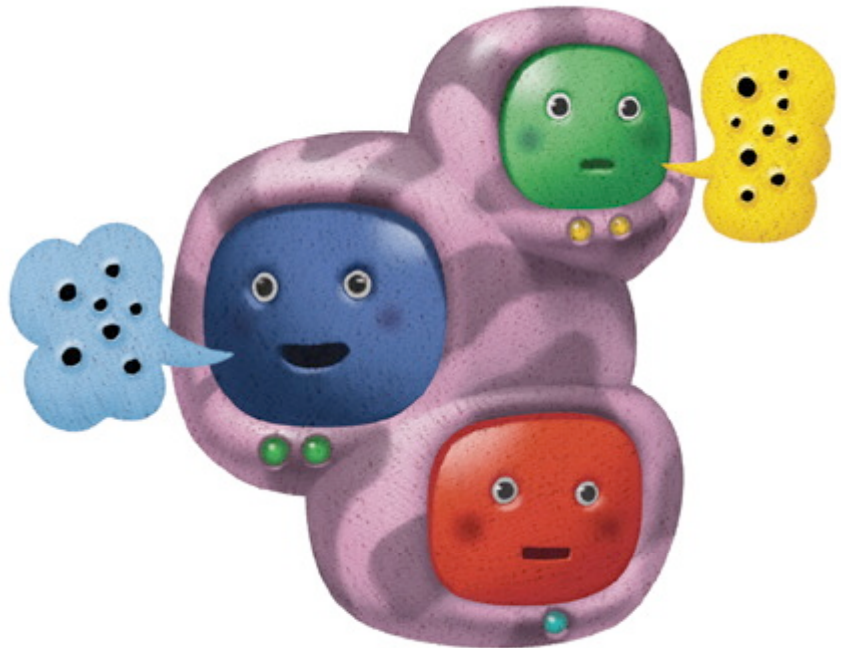
The Internet is used in schools and colleges in a number of key ways.

- **The World Wide Web** provides access to the vast quantity of information and resources available on the Internet. It is made up of millions of screens or 'pages' of information. A collection of pages, created by one organisation or individual, is known as a website. Each page can include text, images, sound, animation and video and has its own unique address. Information on every web page can be read on-line, printed off, or saved onto the user's hard-drive.
- **E-mail** allows users to send and receive written messages. In addition to plain text, images and sound files can also be sent. Messages can either be sent to one recipient or to a group of recipients. Students can, for example, use e-mail for communicating with pen pals, sending questions to a specialist to help with project work, or swapping information about their locality or hobbies with students in other countries.
- **Internet discussion groups** usually consist of a group of people with similar interests or information requirements, who then exchange e-mails about it. This term covers several different forms of communication.
 - **Mailing lists:**
users sign up for a mailing list to receive all e-mails that are sent from other members of that list, and to contribute their own messages.

- **Web-discussion boards:**
these are bulletin board areas on websites where users can read messages about a particular theme or idea that has been posted by other users of the website. Users can also post their own messages.
- **Usenet newsgroups:**
these are like international notice boards where people log into a particular group to read or to contribute remarks or questions.



- **Chat services** allow a number of people to virtually 'meet' on the Internet and have live conversations. Most chat is text-based, and it is similar to having a telephone conversation with a number of people at once except that the participants type instead of talk. Other forms of chat are actually audio-based, and require the computer to have a microphone and speakers. Open chat rooms are not usually used in schools or colleges to avoid any possible compromise to student safety. However, chat rooms are very popular with students who have Internet access at home.
- **Instant messaging (IM) services** are increasingly popular, especially among young people. IM uses technology that is similar to chat rooms, with users conversing through the exchange of text messages in real time over the Internet. IM allows people to detect when other users are on-line and are available to exchange messages. Increasingly, IM will become available on hand-held devices such as Palm and Windows CE packages.



USING THE INTERNET IN YOUR TEACHING

This booklet is concerned with the risks involved in young people using the Internet. However, these risks must be balanced by a consideration of the benefits that the Internet can offer teaching and learning. This section offers ideas and suggestions about how the Internet can be used positively and creatively in education – doubtless, you will know of many more.

The Government's lead agency for ICT in education, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA), says that appropriate use of the Internet offers the following benefits to students:

- improved motivation and attitudes to learning
- development of independent learning and research skills
- improved vocational training
- development of network literacy, for example the capacity to use electronic networks to access and create resources and communicate with others. These activities can be seen as extensions of the traditional skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening
- social development
- subject learning across a wide range of curriculum areas.

Here are just a few ideas of how the Internet could be used in teaching at your school or college. The sites suggested are just a tiny proportion of the useful sites available – an education portal such as the National Grid for Learning (www.ngfl.gov.uk) can guide you to more than 650,000 quality-assured educational pages for children and young people of all ages and interests.

MAKING USE OF THE INTERNET IN THE CURRICULUM

Art:

- building up sketch books of images that have been printed off from the World Wide Web
- viewing and comparing art and design across different periods and places
- creating school websites and/or publishing students' work on-line
- preparing students for visits to galleries or museums.

www.accessart.org.uk

A collection of on-line workshops and educational activities for use by students of all ages and teachers.

www.artcyclopedia.com

Fine art search engine.

Music:

- exploring information about every kind of music available on the web
- accessing lyrics of particular songs
- listening to music over the Internet.

<http://lyrics.ru>

Thousands of lyrics for popular songs.

www.musicatschool.co.uk

Resources and links for secondary school pupils, and for teachers.

Design and technology:

- accessing sites showing the design of various day-to-day objects
- finding out how an industrial expert's designs are progressing (NASA's aerodynamic design and modelling can be viewed at www.nasa.gov, for example)
- creating a website for an imaginary company or organisation.

www.designmuseum.org

On-line exhibitions of 20th and 21st century design for secondary school-aged pupils.

www.technology.org.uk

Enables students to virtually visit factories and industries. Suitable for secondary school-aged pupils.

Citizenship, PSHE and RE:

- finding out about the work of international, national and local voluntary groups
- finding out how government operates
- investigating topical moral, spiritual, political, social and cultural issues
- discussing topical issues via a mediated chat room
- finding out about different religions around the world
- finding out about, or debating, ethical, spiritual and cultural issues.

www.explore.parliament.uk

Information about the role and work of Parliament. Also offers students opportunities to debate topical issues.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

One of the most comprehensive news sites available.

www.reonline.org.uk

Useful links for information about world faiths.

www.childrensworld.org

Award-winning site on children's rights.

English and drama:

- publishing work on the school website
- visiting writing workshops where students can post work, ask questions and receive help from on-line tutors
- accessing copyright-free texts, poems, plays and books
- using discussion groups to discuss set texts
- corresponding with other students around the world
- developing 'critical use' (see page 18) by viewing sites with opposing views, and considering subjectivity/objectivity, fact/opinion, and overt/covert bias.

www.quick.org.uk

Interactive site which helps primary school-aged children understand critical use.

www.roalddahl.com

Activities and information on creative writing, plus information about Dahl's books.

www.mythstories.com

Myths from around the world, with supporting educational information.

www.thenewspaper.org.uk

On-line version of the children's newspaper, containing information about a wide range of topics. Students can contribute stories and express their views about topical issues.



Geography:

- researching the local area
- finding out about the weather, looking at weather sites and viewing pages with live weather stations
- gathering facts and figures about phenomena such as earthquakes, volcanoes and hurricanes
- finding out country information – for example about populations, transport, climate and economic activities.

www.met-office.gov.uk

The Meteorological office's official site.

www.flags.net/mainindex.htm

World flag database.

History:

- evaluating information sources
- visiting museums on-line
- accessing authentic source materials.

www.24hourmuseum.org.uk

The UK's virtual national museum, with special pages for both teachers and young people.

www.history.uk.com

The world's largest free-to-use database of British history, also featuring a timeline of UK history from 1000 BC to the present day, and a live feed covering the latest history news.

Languages:

- communicating with students from other countries via an e-mail project or a discussion group
- finding out about other cultures by accessing foreign news websites, leisure, fashion, travel or sports sites
- using interactive quizzes to practise grammar.

www.ilovelanguages.com

A catalogue of language-related resources, with over 2000 links.

Mathematics and science:

- accessing raw data and statistics
- sharing information so that learners can work with larger and more credible data sets
- following real scientists working in the field
- accessing satellite images for topics like oceanography, climate change, space exploration and astronomy
- accessing up-to-date information on numerous topics such as genetics, medicines or the environment.

www.planet-science.com

A useful library of science and technology sites, plus on-line activities, games and quizzes.

www.censusatschool.ntu.ac.uk

Internet-based project providing students with information for data-handling activities. Appropriate for all ages above seven years old.

www.mathsmaze.co.uk

School resources for maths teaching.

www.counton.org

Site building on the National Numeracy Strategy, suitable for all students above seven years old. Lots of activities and workshops.

PE:

- accessing information about major sporting events
- finding out about health, fitness and diet
- researching the rules of games.

www.teachpe.com

Interactive learning, quizzes, and a sports injury clinic.

MAKING USE OF CHAT FACILITIES

Many schools and educational websites use chat constructively. Through the use of well-structured, moderated sessions, chat is an excellent medium that enables students from around the world to discuss common interests, helping to boost their confidence in expressing views and opinions.

Good sites to consider for mediated chat are:

- www.gridclub.com for key stage 2.
- www.tesan.vuurwerk.nl/diaries/ – an international website which uses chat to link students in different schools.
- www.epals.com – an on-line classroom community for educators and students, with moderated discussion boards and chat rooms.

COLLABORATING INTERNATIONALLY USING E-MAIL

E-mail enables the exchange of ideas, opinions and information, and is a useful medium for discussion, negotiation and argument. The use of e-mail in curriculum projects allows students to communicate quickly and productively with others at their own school, and with students from other schools across the world.

Teachers also have global links to schools and organisations at their disposal. Indeed for many educators, this international dimension is one of the most exciting aspects of using the Internet in teaching. However, even setting up a simple e-mail exchange programme with classes in other countries takes time. Similarly, there is only so much curriculum collaboration that teachers can undertake.

A number of networks exist to give support and advice to schools wishing to set up international collaborative projects. Try the International Educational and Resource Network (www.iearn.org), a non-profit group that enables young people to use the Internet and other new technologies to engage in collaborative educational projects. Eschoolnet (www.eun.org), a programme providing collaboration opportunities, may also be useful. Finally, Childnet (www.childnetacademy.org) has an annual programme which rewards children and teachers who are producing innovative on-line projects that benefit children. The 'Previous Winners' section of the website links to more than 100 websites, many featuring international collaborative schools projects.

FURTHER INFORMATION

BECTA offers a huge range of information and advice about how the Internet and other forms of ICT can support teaching and learning. For further information visit www.becta.org.uk.

SUPPORTING THE EDUCATORS

It is worth remembering that the Internet also supports teachers, lecturers and support staff, enabling them to share experiences, news and information with others. Go to the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) site at www.ngfl.gov.uk for more information. From the NGfL site, you can access the Virtual Teacher Centre (www.vtc.ngfl.gov.uk), which provides support for professional development, school management, special educational needs and on-line discussion groups, as well as lots of useful information and materials.

The curriculum on-line site (www.nc.uk.net/home.html) links every national curriculum programme of study requirement to high quality, relevant teaching resources. Hundreds of good websites are included, and rated on their usefulness by teachers.

The Teachernet site (www.teachernet.gov.uk) is an excellent resource, featuring thousands of lesson plans and other learning tools as well as information about education and teaching. The 'Teachers Online Project' (<http://www.ngfl.gov.uk>), which allows educators to share good practice and sends out a monthly electronic newsletter, is another worthwhile resource. Finally, staff working within the post-compulsory sector may find <http://ferl.becta.org.uk> useful. This site supports users in making effective use of ICT.

Educational professionals in Northern Ireland may like to visit NINE connect (www.nine.org.uk/) which offers on-line resources for the education community in Northern Ireland, including curriculum-focused teaching materials. Finally, the Virtual Teacher Centre for Wales (<http://www.ngfl-cymru.org.uk/>), contains resources to support the teaching of the curriculum in Wales.

Teachers and lecturers wishing to share ideas, views and information with others can join a mailing list to receive regular news and updates on a variety of issues including teaching pupils from ethnic and linguistic minorities, teaching pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and IT solutions to support pupils with special educational needs. For a complete list of groups, visit www.becta.org.uk.



INTERNET SAFETY

Many teachers and parents are aware that the Internet can be dangerous, and this often results in heavy restrictions on young people's Internet use. Outright e-mail and chat room bans are common, but, says Sonia Livingstone¹, this safety is achieved at a cost to learning:

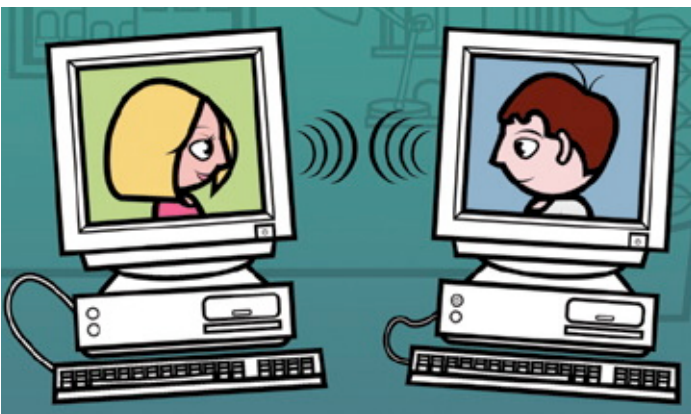
'It seems that it is a child's enthusiasm for on-line communication (rapid, unmoderated images, swearing, sending personal photos and e-mail addresses) that first motivates them to gain the ICT skills, which then transfer to more 'approved' activities; so banning the former inhibits the latter'. She continues: 'If adults limit interactive use and the websites available to children, then they undermine the opportunities for learning through exploration, participation, and fun'.

Clearly, it's a case of getting the balance right. In order to help young people gain the knowledge, decision-making skills and motivation to make responsible choices about the Internet, most literature suggests that schools emphasise the teaching of Internet safety, and combine this educative approach with some form of regulation in order to protect students from risk. The balance between the two options depends largely upon the age of the students and the particular school environment.

What are the risks?

The Internet is anarchic. There is no overall control, and its contents are nearly impossible to censor. Each individual information provider decides which views to express and how to express them, what text to make available and which images, video and sound to provide. Inevitably, some Internet content or activities are illegal, harmful or otherwise inappropriate – because they are racist, indecent, violent, pornographic, exploitative or otherwise upsetting. As students 'roam' the Internet, visiting new sites, sending or receiving e-mails from individuals their teachers, parents or carers do not know, they are potentially at risk from those who may seek to harm them.

The most significant Internet dangers for unsupervised young people fall into three categories: **contact**, **content** and **commerce**.



¹ Sonia Livingstone, 'Online freedom and safety for children' IPPR/Citizens Online, 2001. London: The Stationery Office.

Contact

Young people love to talk on the phone and send text messages to friends. Visiting a chat room or using an instant messaging service is equally attractive to them, especially as users usually give themselves an alias name and can be whoever they want to be – older, younger, etc. Because it's impossible to verify the identity of anyone in a chat room, and because chat rooms are so popular with young people, there is a small risk that paedophiles or sex abusers may use them to contact potential victims. Adults who want to exploit young people might pose as children or teenagers themselves, strike up friendships and eventually request off-line contact – all with the eventual aim of abuse. Recent research by the charity Childnet² has revealed that the twenty Internet chat rooms most popular with young people have no safety standards, and few safety messages. Young people are worryingly unaware of these dangers: research by the Cyberspace Research Unit in July 2002 revealed that nearly one third of 9–16 year olds surveyed were unaware of the dangers of face-to-face meetings with on-line friends³.

It is also worth remembering that inappropriate contact can occur within as well as outside schools. New manifestations of age-old problems of bullying and harassment can manifest themselves in the sending of insulting or threatening e-mail messages to others. A recent study by children's charity NCH revealed that 23 per cent of young people in the South West of England had been bullied via text messages, in Internet chat rooms or via e-mail – this reflects the national figure of one in four young people being the victim of on-line bullying⁴.

Content

The definition of inappropriate content varies according to the age of the user and the social and cultural context. As the World Wide Web is not controlled by any organisation or body, it inevitably contains materials, information or images that are upsetting, harmful or otherwise inappropriate for students. Estimates of the extent of pornographic material on the World Wide Web range from 1.5 per cent of all 8,000 million pages, to 85 per cent of the 3,900 new pages created every day⁵. Visits to inappropriate sites may be deliberate, but could also be inadvertent – perhaps because of a mistyped web address or via a suggested link from a search engine. It's worth noting that many sites containing explicit content are deliberately given innocuous-sounding or misleading web addresses.

Unacceptable material isn't just limited to pornography. There are 'hate' or 'intolerance' sites which are racist, violent, or bigoted, and historical revisionist sites containing inaccurate information. There are also gory sites depicting horrific injuries, sites offering bomb-making instructions or information about purchasing guns or other violent weapons, gambling sites and those propounding the use of drugs, alcohol or tobacco. Children may also find 'cult' sites on-line, and they can be drawn by strangers they meet in chat rooms. In addition, many sites detail how to 'hack' into others' personal computers, destroy data, or spread viruses. Others offer false registration of computer software, which is illegal.

² Childnet website (www.chatdanger.com/setframe.html) under 'recommendations' (1.5.02).

³ For more information, go to www.theonceproject.net

⁴ NCH, poll of 11-19 year olds during Feb/March 2002.

⁵ **Safeguarding the Wired Schoolhouse: A briefing paper on school district options for providing access to appropriate Internet content.** The consortium for School Networking (6/01).

What are the risks?

Sometimes, students may access information on the Internet which is not of malicious intent but is inaccurate, spurious, gimmicky or biased. Unless they have learnt 'critical use' skills, they may not have the experience or knowledge to discount information they find on these sites.

Finally, young people may also access inappropriate material via unsolicited e-mails (called 'spam'), which are sent in bulk to thousands of users. Even if the school-based e-mail system filters these out, there are few restrictions on the kind of information that can be sent to web-based e-mail accounts such as Hotmail or Yahoo, and the contents of spam may be pornographic, violent, or tempting but dubious 'get rich quick' schemes.



Commerce

Lots of websites – including those aimed at the education sector – contain advertising banners and marketing messages. The distinction between content and advertising is much more subtle on the Internet than in other media. Younger Internet users are easily influenced by marketing messages, and research suggests that children are sometimes unable to distinguish advertising from other kinds of website content⁶.

Furthermore, organisations catering for the youth market have been quick to use the Internet to gather valuable personal information about their target market. Registering for contests or filling out on-line forms in exchange for prizes can easily generate valuable information for fundraising or marketing purposes. Students' privacy is often violated through aggressive direct marketing and the collection of marketing information.

⁶ **Usability of Websites for Children**, by Jakob Nielsen and Shuli Gilutz, reported in Newsweek, 22 April 2002.

How schools and colleges can protect students from the risks

Most UK schools protect their students from risk by combining **technology** (firewalls, blocking programmes), **education** (teaching students about the dangers the Internet can pose and how to cope with them) and **regulation** (an acceptable use policy which enforces rules about what, when and how the Internet should be used in school).

USING TECHNOLOGY

Many commercial products are available which can help limit the potential dangers to students on the Internet. Filtering systems use a combination of website blacklists and keyword spotters to ensure that sites containing information about sex, drugs or violence cannot be accessed. A blocking strategy can help schools block sites they do not want students to visit. Alternatively a 'walled garden' approach permits access to approved sites only. E-mail safety can also be enforced by restricting addressees to a set list or by filtering e-mails for inappropriate content. Software can also help to monitor the time that students spend on the computer and the material they have been viewing.

Schools generally employ some form of the technology described in the previous paragraph to protect their students. For primary-aged students, such measures are particularly appropriate, as younger children may not always have the experience or maturity to make informed judgements about what constitutes inappropriate material or how to avoid it. It is important that technological solutions are chosen carefully to support the needs of different age groups – for example filtering software that is customisable for different year groups and subjects. However, technological solutions should never replace teacher supervision.

The limitations of technology

However helpful they may be, no single filtering product can be guaranteed to wholly prevent students from accessing inappropriate material. For a start, older students can sometimes find ways to get around the filters. Moreover, a review by the magazine **Which!** found that while most products were good at blocking sex-related sites, they often did not prevent access to other inappropriate material such as pages containing bomb making instructions, promoting drug use or containing racist propaganda. Conversely, visits to innocent sites from which older students may have benefited were also frequently blocked. Sonia Livingstone goes further, claiming that:

'As yet, technical solutions don't work well, encountering persistent practical difficulties. At best they provide only part of the solution, at worst they engender a false sense of security. Moreover, technical and legislative solutions tend to trade freedoms against safety, while education allows for a both/and approach, guiding children towards valuable uses of the Internet while also teaching them safety awareness.'⁷

Finally, there are freedom of information issues associated with the use of blocking technology. While a school has an obligation to determine the appropriateness of material for students, this should not extend to a restriction of students' access to sites in order to suppress unpopular ideas. The act of deeming a particular web page 'inappropriate' is by necessity a subjective act – so when schools and colleges use filtering technology, they should ensure that the blocking decisions of private companies are not based on vague or discriminatory rationale.

⁷ Sonia Livingstone, '**Online freedom and safety for children**' IPPR/Citizens Online, 2001. London: The Stationery Office.

Helpful resources for selecting appropriate regulatory technology are available at the **GetNetWise site** (www.getnetwise.org), which details the functions of software tools and provides information on other resources such as special Internet browsers for children, kids-only search engines, children's safe areas and the efforts Internet service providers are making to help keep children safe on the Internet. You could also try the 'Superhighway safety' website for an overview of the issues (<http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools>).

USING EDUCATION

Students are using the Internet in an increasing variety of environments – at home, at a friend's house, in an Internet cafe or a library. While there may be adults on hand to supervise usage, it is vital that young people understand how to be responsible and stay safe on-line. This educative responsibility generally falls to schools and colleges, as, according to Sonia Livingstone:

'Education for children is the key because technical solutions are flawed, the home is rarely so safe an environment as the school, parents are not always able to guide and supervise appropriately, and so children must be prepared to deal with any harm they encounter. Children will also benefit from the sense of responsibility and competence which Internet literacy and safety training will engender.'⁸

Nancy Willard, Director of Responsible Netizen at the University of Oregon, USA, likens Internet safety education to road safety, in that when children are too young to recognise the dangers of crossing a street, they only cross when accompanied by an adult. During that time, adults talk about road safety and teach children to avoid the danger. Gradually children are allowed more freedom, but adults watch for unsafe behaviour and use these moments to reiterate the dangers and skills necessary to avoid them. When children are old enough and have demonstrated that they understand how to make sensible choices, they are allowed to cross the street by themselves. 'The same strategy can be used to help our young people gain the knowledge, skills and motivation to use the Internet in a safe and responsible manner' she says⁹. For more information about Responsible Netizen, go to <http://responsiblenetizen.org>.

⁸ Sonia Livingstone, 'Online freedom and safety for children' IPPR/Citizens Online, 2001. London: The Stationery Office.

⁹ 'Choosing not to go down the not-so-good cyberstreets', Nancy Willard, Director, Responsible Netizen. National Academy of Science workshop, December 13, 2000.

So establishing 'safe places for learning' with firewalls or blocking technology is a useful strategy for protecting younger students while they develop the awareness to protect themselves on the Internet and to handle the dangerous situations they may encounter. 'Education, supervision, monitoring and appropriate discipline are critically important during this stage' says Willard.

Most schools therefore promote educated awareness among their students, ensuring that young people make responsible decisions about what to access and how to conduct themselves on-line. The safety strategies adopted by schools are, of course, highly age-dependent: the nature of the safety message, the degree of Internet competency expected, and the importance of protecting the individual's right to freedom of information must all be considered with the individual student in mind.

Educating students about inappropriate contact

The interactive elements of the Internet pose risks of inappropriate contact, as detailed on page 11. Educating students about using the interactive elements of the Internet safely is particularly important as they are likely to use chat rooms and send and receive e-mails from home, where Internet use may not be as tightly monitored as it is at school.

Introducing the topic of inappropriate contact

You might introduce an exercise on inappropriate contact with a group discussion about the dangers of the Internet.

Opening questions could include:

- how many of you have used the Internet outside the classroom?
- what don't you like about the Internet?
- has anyone here used a chat room?
- what do you think are the dangers of using the Internet?
- do you think there should be the equivalent of a road safety code for the Internet?
- have you ever been asked to give your personal details on the Internet?



The charity Childnet has developed the following '**SMART**' mnemonic to teach students a memorable set of safety guidelines to follow when using chat rooms. You might want to display this (call Childnet on 020 7639 6967 for a poster), or a variation on this information in your school's ICT suite. If your school has a website, you could also download and display an on-line rules banner on chat room safety from Childnet (www.childnet-int.org).

- S** **SECRET** – Always keep your name, address, mobile phone number and password private – it's like giving out the keys to your home!
- M** **MEETING** someone you have contacted on the Internet can be dangerous. Only do so with your parent's/carer's permission, and make sure they are present at the meeting.
- A** **ACCEPTING** e-mails or opening files from people you don't really know or trust can get you into trouble – they may contain viruses or nasty messages.
- R** **REMEMBER** someone on-line may be lying and not be who they say they are. Stick to the public areas in chat rooms and if you feel uncomfortable, simply get out of there!
- T** **TELL** your parent, teacher or carer if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried.

Staying smart on-line

Childnet has produced an on-line interactive guide to safe behaviour in chat rooms for key stage 2 students. Staying Smart On-line (www.kidsmart.org.uk) is a simple and intuitive guide for young children. By playing, reading and answering multiple-choice questions, students are encouraged to think about Internet safety. Depending on the experience of the students, teachers can ask students to work through the module individually, or run it as a class exercise using a data projector.

The guide's key message is that 'it is smart to be careful', and that students should ask for help if they need it. It aims to help young Internet users acquire good habits which they will remember as they use the Internet and other interactive devices such as their mobile phones. Staying Smart On-line helps them to understand the dangers and to talk about the issues **before** they get into trouble.

The Staying Smart guide concludes by encouraging students to help spread the word about being 'smart' on-line.

Here are some activities which can be used as follow-up work.

- Designing a poster with the SMART mnemonic for the classroom – there's an example on the kidsmart website. See other examples produced by children at www.childnet-int.org.
- Getting students to communicate SMART rules using text language or emoticons (symbols and abbreviated text used in mobile text messaging and chat rooms). A separate work sheet is available on this in the teachers' area of www.kidsmart.org.uk.
- Encouraging students to write a poem or rap on SMART.
- Having a classroom discussion about mobile telephones, as safety advice about being careful with your private information on-line increasingly applies to children using mobile telephones. Many children have been sent abusive text messages and give out their mobile telephone numbers to strangers. Because mobile telephones increasingly have Internet access, it is important to address this subject now.

Issues around educating students about inappropriate contact

Internet safety agencies agree that educating young people about inappropriate contact is crucial. They also stress that teaching should empower students to make responsible decisions through a greater understanding of the issues underlying the guidelines, rather than by the imposition of a set of safety 'rules' to be learned by rote. For example, all chat room users are encouraged to use nicknames and 'virtual identities' in order to protect themselves from danger. This level of 'deception' is acceptable, but other deceptions – posing as a young person in order to glean personal information, for example, is – confusingly for a child – not acceptable. Teaching students that they should tell a parent, carer or teacher 'if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried' assumes children know what the dangers are in chat rooms and what 'should' make them feel uncomfortable. Rachel O'Connell of the Cyberspace Research Unit (CRU) at the University of Central Lancashire comments:

'If we provide one-dimensional safety guidelines with inherently unmanageable ambiguities without enhancing children's conceptual frameworks about the dangers they are likely to face and why they need to heed guidelines, then ultimately children are not being educated'¹⁰.

The CRU has developed a 'For Kids By Kids' website (www.internetsafetyzone.com) containing an interactive guide to chat room use. It explains the dangers of giving out personal information and meeting up with friends made on the Internet. It also provides advice on on-line harassment and explains how to save chat transcripts and block unpleasant users. Other sections cover how to trace e-mails, and tackle junk mail and on-line bullying.



¹⁰ 'Be somebody else but yourself at all times: degrees of identity deception in chatrooms' by Rachel O' Connor. Text available from the ONCE website (www.theonceproject.net).

Educating students about inappropriate content

Educating students about inappropriate content requires a careful approach: talking about inappropriate sites could encourage the very kind of exploration you are trying to discourage. Students need to understand why sites are inappropriate, and learning about ‘critical use’ equips them to identify dangerous or dubious information.

Critical use

A good checklist of questions that students can ask themselves when evaluating a site follows. For more information, or to use the checklist on-line, visit www.quick.org.uk. The site is aimed at students at key stage 2 and key stage 3, but may also be useful for older pupils working more independently.

1 Is it clear who has written the information?

- Who is the author?
- Is it an organisation or an individual?
- Is there a way to contact them?

2 Are the aims of the site clear?

- What are the aims of the site?
- What is it for?
- Who is it for?

3 Does the site achieve its aims?

- Does the site do what it says it will?

4 Is the site relevant to me?

5 Can the information be checked?

- Is the author qualified to write the site?
- Has anyone said the same things anywhere else?
- Is there any way of checking this out?
- If the information is new, is there any proof?

6 When was the site produced?

- Is it up to date?
- Can you check to see if the information is up to date rather than just the site?

7 Is the information biased in any way?

- Has the site got a particular reason for wanting you to think in a particular way?
- Does it present a balanced view or only give one opinion?

8 Does the site tell you about choices open to you?

- Does the site give you advice?
- Does it tell you about other ideas?

The Internet Watch Foundation campaigns to remove illegal material from the Internet. If students come across material that is illegal (for example, child pornography), schools should contact the Internet Watch Foundation’s hotline on 08456 008844 or go to www.iwf.org.uk/hotline.

List five things to find out from the site:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Copyright, intellectual property, defamation and libel

For older students, discussion of copyright and intellectual property with regard to the World Wide Web may be useful. Broadly, the rightful owner of the copyright of a piece of work on the Internet is the author or creator, and students should be aware that copying large sections of text may be an infringement of copyright. There is useful advice on this issue at www.safety.ngfl.gov.uk. Students also need to understand that sending an e-mail, posting a message or building a web page that contains untruths about another person or organisation may be unlawful.

Educating students about inappropriate commerce

Many 'inappropriate contact' guidelines also apply to inappropriate commerce. Students should be taught critical use skills so that they are better equipped to recognise the differences between biased and unbiased sources. They should also be warned against divulging personal information on-line, as this can be collected and used to send them aggressive marketing materials or 'spam' e-mails.

The Internet proficiency scheme for key stage 2 pupils

To aid the teaching of safe and productive Internet behaviour, BECTA offers an Internet proficiency scheme for key stage 2 pupils.

The scheme aims to:

- develop 'safe and discriminating behaviour' for students to adopt when using the Internet and other technologies
- provide teachers with support materials to develop students' safe behaviour on the Internet
- offer students a set of activities that allow them to demonstrate what they know and understand about using the Internet safely.

The 'safe and discriminating behaviour' is directly related to the skills, knowledge and understanding as set out in the national curriculum and schemes of work for ICT, PSHE and citizenship at key stage 2. Teaching materials (which consist of a teacher's pack and an interactive website) are available – for more information about the scheme, e-mail internetprof@becta.org.uk or go to <http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools>.



USING REGULATION

Regulating Internet use to ensure student safety

The following general guidelines about regulating Internet use at school are a good starting point when considering safety issues:

- site computers in open areas to ensure that teachers/librarians/teaching assistants can see what is on the screens
- ensure that student Internet use is supervised by teachers, school librarians or teaching assistants
- set clear aims and objectives for Internet use and make students aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour while using the Internet
- monitor on-line time and be aware of excessive hours spent on the Internet using monitoring or tracking software
- set up a reporting system so that students and schools know what to do if they find upsetting material.

Regulating chat room access to prevent inappropriate contact

- Familiarise yourself with any chat room used to ensure that it offers a genuine educational experience.
- Students should only be given access to educational chat rooms. The use of 'chat' in an educational context should always be supervised and students should be taught the importance of safety within any chat room.
- Students should only use moderated chat rooms, a task usually undertaken by a teacher or other recognised, identifiable and approved adult. The moderator (or referee) checks what users are saying and ensures that the rules of the chat room (no bad language, propositions, or other inappropriate behaviour) are observed. If users breaking the rules are not thrown out, or warned publicly, the moderator is not on-line or is ineffective.
- Some sites use software programmes in addition to human moderation to screen the incoming text. If software is used, check which keywords are screened for, for example expletives, 'sex', 'meet', 'secret', and so on.
- A good chat room should have very clear Terms and Conditions and a Privacy Statement which should be upheld and enforced. It should remind users of the dangers and display prominent safety tips.
- A good educational chat room should publish topics and questions being discussed in advance. The chat room should ensure that a 'host' oversees and leads the chat just as a teacher does in a classroom. Sometimes this 'host' will also serve as the moderator.

- Some popular chat rooms have advertising and links to other sites and services. It is therefore vital that you check out who runs the chat room and whether it has a clear educational objective. Some chat rooms include an archive of earlier chat sessions – this can be a helpful resource when assessing the value of students taking part in future sessions.
- For chat rooms to be used effectively in an educational context, it is vital that students have genuine opportunities to express their views, to learn from one another and to initiate new chat sessions.
- Check to see if students can 'log' their conversations in the chat room.
- Find out if anyone can join the chat room. Is there a clear differentiation of age groups? How does the chat room verify passwords and users?

If anything unpleasant happens while students are in the chat room, they should leave. Some chat rooms offer the facility to block messages from other users, or to report abusive behaviour to the host. If students think that they are being contacted by a paedophile, then schools should use their normal child protection procedures.



Regulating the use of e-mail

E-mail systems can be set up and administered in a variety of ways, with different levels of access and control over what can be sent and to whom. For example, a school e-mail system might be set up so that students cannot send and receive external e-mail. In this type of 'closed system', students are only able to send and receive e-mail from other students or staff at the same school. Students could still exchange e-mails with partner schools all over the world, but the correspondence would go via the teacher.

At the other end of the spectrum, students could be provided with full e-mail access, allowing them to correspond with anyone with an e-mail account anywhere in the world. In this scenario, teachers are unable to keep effective track of the nature and content of the correspondence, or to offer support and feedback.

In reality, schools are most likely to require a system that falls somewhere in between these two examples. Schools may want to restrict some students to using internal e-mail only, while providing others with greater access. Similarly, schools may wish to provide some students with limited external e-mail access so that they can only correspond with an approved list of addresses. At the same time, schools may wish to provide full external e-mail access to their staff.

Remember that many students use webmail services such as Hotmail or Yahoo. This means that they can easily access their e-mail accounts independently of school-based systems.

Other measures that can be taken to ensure the safe use of e-mail at school follow below:

- To ensure that everyone is aware of their rights and responsibilities, ask students and parents to sign an acceptable use policy or code of conduct for e-mail use (see page 23).
- Teach students about the writing and social conventions inherent in the use of e-mail. This will equip them with the necessary skills to communicate effectively.
- Produce a recognised policy of treating all incoming and outgoing e-mail as public. This will reduce the risk of inappropriate content or use.
- Establish a recognised procedure for reporting misuse of e-mail and the subsequent sanctions.
- Carry out regular checks of incoming and outgoing e-mail.

Regulating school or college websites to prevent inappropriate contact

- Avoid the use of the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people outside the school. An easy rule to remember is:
 - if the student is named, avoid using their photograph
 - if the photograph is used, avoid naming the student.
- Ask for parental permission to use an image of a student.
- Use photographs of items designed and made in technology lessons, excerpts from written work and scanned images of artwork. This allows students to exhibit their work to a wider audience without increasing the risk of inappropriate use of images of students.
- Only use images of students in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.
- Create a recognised procedure for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to students.



As more young people set up their own websites, particular attention should be paid to the contents of these web pages. Sadly, a number of young people have been hurt through placing inappropriate information on their own websites, and they must remember that however private a personal home page is, it is still very much a public space.

ADOPTING AN ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

An acceptable use policy is a way of developing a standard school-wide approach towards Internet regulation and education, and communicating it to students, teachers, parents and governors. It should be developed as part of the whole school ICT policy, and usually takes the form of a document, signed by students and their parents, guardians or carers, detailing the ways in which the Internet can and cannot be used. Often schools link their acceptable use policy to their home-school agreements.

BECTA suggest that an acceptable use policy might include:

- a requirement that all potential Internet users understand basic conventions and navigation techniques before going on-line and accessing web pages
- a reminder that logs are kept of the sites students visit, including details of reasons for access
- an undertaking by users to act responsibly and use the Internet in school for course-related work only
- an undertaking by students to respect copyright and not to plagiarise others' work
- an agreement by users to download pages to personal floppy disks, rather than to the machine's hard disk and an explanation of why such restrictions are necessary
- permission for members of staff to check personal disks for viruses and unsuitable material

- a pledge by users not to attempt to access unsuitable material
- a reminder that the possession of certain types of unsuitable material can lead to prosecution by the police
- information on sanctions for violations of the agreed acceptable use policy.

Procedures for dealing with students who misuse or abuse Internet access need to be determined at the outset. Sanctions should be built into the user guidelines and the likely penalties for violation of the rules outlined.

Minor infringements may be dealt with by enforcing a temporary ban on Internet use or by additional disciplinary action in accordance with existing school or college procedures and policies. For serious violations, the police may be involved.

Examples of acceptable use policies can be found on the Internet itself. Some of them can be freely copied and adapted for use in your own school or organisation. The British Computer Society and the National Association of Advisers for Computers in Education have produced a booklet **Promoting the Responsible use of the Internet in Schools** (downloadable from www.naace.org). This advises each school to set aside time to develop its own policy. It argues that this gives members of staff the opportunity to talk through the issues surrounding use of the Internet in education, and means that policies meet local needs. See Appendix A on page 30 for more information.

Other sources of advice on developing an acceptable use policy

Kent Local Education Authority has produced a template to help schools write their own acceptable use policies. The template presents policy issues using questions and a range of possible responses. There are also examples of responsible use guidelines and letters to parents. Have a look on www.kented.org.uk/ngfl/policy.html.

The Association for ICT in Education (ACITT) website (www.acitt.org.uk) also has useful material which can be tailored to each school's use, including a school policy, school procedures, student guidelines, and a permission letter for parents and carers.

Working with parents and carers

The vast majority of Internet usage takes place in the home rather than in school or college – according to recent figures¹¹ 64 per cent of homes with school children have Internet access. Students are more likely to explore the Internet for fun at home than at school (when usage is more likely to be focused and supervised), and the risks of encountering unsuitable material or behaviour are obviously higher here. Moreover, a school is also far more likely to have filtering or blocking mechanisms in place.

For these reasons, schools and colleges may like to consider working with parents and carers to ensure that, as far as possible, established good practice is replicated in the home. When asking students to sign an acceptable use policy before they can enjoy access to the Internet at school, consider giving parents and carers additional information about the issues involved so that they can also begin to consider Internet safety in the home. Childnet even suggests raising the issue directly with parents and carers, perhaps by making information available during parents' evenings.

¹¹ **Internet safety – why is it so important at a national level?** Speech by Ade Alao, NGfL Division, DfES, at Internet Safety Seminar, 22 March, 2001.

The following guidelines have been adapted from the charity Childnet's advice, and can be photocopied and shared with parents and carers.

You may also like to point them towards **www.safety.ngfl.gov.uk/parents/**, where they will find lots of information about Internet safety.

- 1** Keep the computer in a family room rather than locked away in a bedroom. Take the time to learn how the Internet works and spend time surfing together with your children and learn from them. There are some excellent on-line guides for parents which explain how the Internet works and how to get the best out of using it with your children. See the BBC Webwise campaign **www.bbc.co.uk/webwise**.
- 2** Make sure you warn your children about strangers they may meet on-line. In the same way that you are wary of a stranger knocking on your door, make sure your children never volunteer any personal details about themselves, their school or family, (their address, telephone number or photograph for example). Make sure they don't use your credit card number without permission.
- 3** Be especially careful about your children using chat rooms unsupervised – especially those which are not moderated. Visit Childnet's Chat danger (**www.chatdanger.com**) website for advice. Don't allow your children to meet anyone they have contacted via the Internet without going with them.
- 4** Encourage your children to stick to the positive sites that you want them to visit. Just as you look out for good TV programmes for children, take the time to find the best and most useful websites for you and your family.
- 5** Consider using filtering software that restricts access to certain parts of the Internet. Remember such software is no substitute for good parental involvement.
- 6** Discuss Internet safety with your children. Discussing the potential dangers with your children requires care and sensitivity and involves helping them to see the dangers for themselves.
- 7** Know how to report harmful or illegal material on the Internet. The Internet Watch Foundation's hotline is 08456 008844. You can also report such sites on-line at **www.iwf.org.uk**.

4

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Technology is perpetually evolving and new interactive services are constantly appearing. Remember, less than six years ago we hadn't even heard of chat rooms. It's likely that familiar activities will become obsolete as new and developing technologies present new challenges and risks.

Schools and colleges therefore need to constantly look ahead to see how developments in technology will affect young people. What seems certain is that websites will become increasingly multi-media, offering speech and high-quality sound, video, graphics and text. The Internet will also become more 'portable' and accessible through hand-held devices and mobile phones. The explosion of text 'chat' via mobile phones seems set to become even more popular among young people, and Internet services such as 'I-mode' for mobile phones will become increasingly common.

Ultralab (www.ultralab.ac.uk), a learning technology research laboratory based at Anglia Polytechnic University, organises a range of interesting projects, all of which explore how the Internet and other forms of technology can be used creatively and successfully in education.

Schools and colleges play a huge role in shaping ideas and approaches to future use of technology, as demonstrated by one of Ultralab's projects, 'By teachers for teachers'. Recognising that 'the pace of change of new technology is frenetic, but in our classrooms many teachers are using computers in exciting ways to take their learners forward', the project aims to create a forum for the exchange of ideas and thoughts about teachers' successes and failures in this area. Have a look, or share your ideas, on www.tfort.net.

Whatever new forms of technology and interactive services develop over coming years, it's likely that, used safely, they will bring hugely positive benefits for both learners and teachers. According to Ultralab Director Stephen Heppell¹², electronic forms of learning will increasingly offer the opportunity 'to explore new expertises, take new risks, develop new collaborations, gain new understandings'. He continues, 'As we've seen in so many projects at Ultralab, it is also about multiple media and multiple learning styles, together with the opportunity to change the mix to suit the content, the learners, their predispositions and their entitlements. Comfortingly, it is also about allowing teachers to do what they entered the profession to do: inspire, lead and delight children whilst rejoicing in their rapid progression'.

¹² 'The Future of E-Learning' Interview with NGfL Scotland's *Connected* magazine, Spring 2002

FURTHER INFORMATION

This booklet is intended as an introduction, rather than an exhaustive guide, to the many issues that relate to Internet safety and Internet use in education. There is a plethora of on-line advice, information and shared experience available to those who wish to explore further, some of which are included in this section. As you explore the Internet, you will doubtless come across many more – so why not make a note at the end of this section of any useful addresses you find?

Introducing the Internet

The BBC

www.bbc.co.uk/webwise

Offers an excellent introduction to the Internet. Register for an on-line course, or browse the glossary, frequently asked questions or case studies sections.

BECTA

www.ictadvice.org.uk

Offers school-specific guidance about ICT and, specifically, the Internet.

The rough guide to the Internet

Angus J Kennedy

Rough Guides, 2001. ISBN: 1858287391

Using the Internet in your teaching

Suggested websites for all curriculum subjects can be found at the Curriculum Online site www.nc.uk.net.

You could also look at the Teachernet site www.ternet.gov.uk/usefulsites/.

Making use of adult helpers in the classroom – ICT in the classroom

Schools' Committee – Early Years Working Group, The British Computer Society (visit www.bcs.org.uk or call 01793 417424 for more information).

Using the Internet in secondary schools

Mike Farmer, James Hargrave and Eta De Cicco
Kogan Page, 1998. ISBN: 0749425229

Activities for using the Internet in primary schools

Eta De Cicco, Mike Farmer and Claire Hargrave
Kogan Page, 1999. ISBN: 0749429895.



Internet safety

Get Net Wise

www.getnetwise.org

Site funded by group of Internet corporations and public interest organisations. Offers an online safety guide, information about internet safety products, and lots of suggestions of good websites for children and young people.

Police Child Pornography Information Line

A freephone police number to report incidents of child pornography (0808 100 0040), which can also be accessed online **www.met.police.uk**.

Superhighway safety

(<http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools/>)

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and BECTA have been providing advice and information to schools on Internet safety issues through the 'Superhighway Safety' pack since 1998. This website includes advice on evaluating filtering products, using chat and e-mail in the classroom, intellectual property and copyright and images of students on school websites. Full versions of the advice can be downloaded from the site and printed packs are available from DfES publications (0845 602 2260).

The Superhighway Safety guide includes a useful 'example of good practice' section, which details how other schools and colleges have approached Internet safety issues such as filtering inappropriate content or the use of chat rooms by pupils.

Childnet International

(www.childnet-int.org/)

Childnet is committed to ensuring that children benefit from new media like the Internet. The organisation is especially concerned with promoting the interests of children in international communications.

Childnet has a number of subsites:

www.netaware.org is aimed at improving awareness generally.

www.chatdanger.com looks specifically at the dangers of Internet chat rooms.

www.childnet-int.org is a special children's area where children can describe how they feel about the Internet.

www.kidsmart.org.uk is an Internet safety programme run through schools.

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

UK residents can contact the IWF's 24-hour hotline anonymously to report anything on the Internet that they believe to be illegal. The IWF will then carry out its own investigation, and if the material is potentially illegal, report it to the police either in the UK or overseas. The IWF will also contact the Internet Service Provider (ISP) that is hosting the material in order to get it removed. You can call the IWF on 08456 008844 or e-mail report@iwf.org.uk.

NCH

(www.nch.org.uk/)

NCH is a national children's charity. Visit the www.nch.org.uk/itok website, which introduces safety messages to key stage 2 students. There is also a teachers' section on the site.

Wise up to the Net!

(www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

The UK government's Internet safety campaign includes a safe surfing booklet which you can download and pass on to parents of the children in your class. Printed copies are available from 0800 77 1234.

Childline

Written for children, www.childline.org.uk/safesurfing.asp is another good site run by the children's charity Childline.

ONCE

(www.theonceproject.net)

The ONCE project teaches children to navigate safely by facilitating communication and exchange via discussion forums.

Looking to the future

(<http://tfort.net>)

A collection of teachers' useful classroom ideas for using ICT.

Transforming the way we learn – a vision of the future of ICT in schools

DfES, 2002. ISBN: 1 84185 658 4. Copies available from www.dfes.gov.uk/ictfutures or by calling the DfES publications line on 0845 222 60.

Other useful resources:

APPENDIX A

Promoting the responsible use of the Internet in schools

The importance of establishing a school-wide strategy for Internet access is emphasised throughout this booklet. The development of an Internet access policy plays an integral part of such a strategy. These policies can be downloaded directly from the Internet, but most experts advise schools to develop their own so that local circumstances can be considered. To aid this process, the following text has been adapted from 'Promoting the responsible use of the Internet in schools', a paper by The National Association of Advisers for Computers in Education and The British Computer Society. The full text can be found on www.naace.org.uk.

BACKGROUND

The Internet is a valuable educational resource that gives both students and teachers access to information from a vast range of sources based throughout the world. As with any school resource, ICT needs to be managed to maximise its role in developing and supporting the educational policies of the school. Every school should develop an overall ICT policy containing a statement on Internet use.

Some Internet information may be inappropriate for students, and it is wise to have a policy in place to address this. Management has a duty to ensure that before students use the Internet, staff have had the opportunity to discuss how they will deal sensitively with inappropriate use. The policy will help to define appropriate and acceptable use by both staff and students and create a focus for continual debate. The most effective policy has the full backing of staff and students.

AN OUTLINE POLICY ON THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF THE INTERNET

As with all policies, governors and teachers need to be involved from the start. It may be that your school already has a Policies Working Group, or a member of staff who works closely with the governing body to develop and monitor school policies. An Internet access policy should build on these existing working practices, and should involve the ICT coordinator.

The Internet in school

- How will Internet use enhance students' educational opportunities?
- How will the National Grid for Learning resources be used to raise educational standards?
- How will effective use of the wealth of material on the Internet be monitored?
- What benefits will Internet use bring to the professional work of school staff?
- How will ICT improve the school's information management systems?
- Will the school use the Internet as a channel of communication to government, the LEA and other educational establishments?
- How does the school see its relationship with the community changing with improved access to communications?

The Internet in the curriculum

- How will Internet access be integrated into learning activities?
- Who will be responsible for developing student and staff research skills, including the effective, reasonable and legal use of information retrieved?
- Which subject(s) will focus on developing students' information-handling skills?
- Will the school establish its own website?
- Will students' work be published on the school's or any other website?
- How will the school make use of e-mail facilities?
- How will students be taught to validate information and messages communicated over the Internet?
- How will children be educated to follow sensible rules for personal safety?

Responsibility

- How will students be educated to take responsibility for Internet access?
- How will students be made aware of the issues of unacceptable use?
- How will intellectual property rights and copyright be discussed?
- How will children report if they feel uncomfortable about material or messages?
- What action will teachers take if students report receipt of unacceptable material?
- How will parents be kept informed of the school's strategy?
- Will parent or guardian's permission be sought before students are allowed Internet access?
- Will the school work with parents to encourage appropriate use outside school?
- Will staff and students be asked to sign acceptable use policies?

Internet access

- Who will use the equipment and where will it be located, for example in a public area?
- Which age groups of students will be supervised and in what way?
- How will you identify and register authorised users?
- Will there be restrictions on equipment use?
- Which ISP will be used, for example the LEA or commercial provider?
- Does the school's ISP provide a filtering system appropriate to the age of students?
- Who will be responsible for password security?

Monitoring

- How will the school evaluate the effectiveness of ICT use?
- How often will the school's ICT system be checked for inappropriate material and viruses?
- How will students be informed that checks are routinely made on files held on the system?
- Will the school implement any filtering in addition to services provided by the ISP, or can the school work with the ISP to review and improve the filtering system?
- Will regular reports on use be submitted to governors?

Sanctions

- What are the school's procedures for dealing with students who access unsuitable material?

Dissemination and review

- How will staff and students be informed of the policy and its contents?
- Who will be responsible for keeping this policy up to date?
- How often will it be reviewed?

APPENDIX B

Internet permission letter – sample

Dear Parent,

INTERNET ACCESS FOR STUDENTS

As part of the school's ICT programme, we offer students supervised access to the Internet. Before the school allows students to use the Internet, they must obtain parental permission. Both they and you must sign and return the enclosed form as evidence of your approval and their acceptance of the rules on this matter.

Various projects have proven the educational benefits of the Internet, which will enable students to explore thousands of libraries, databases, and bulletin boards. They will also be able to exchange messages with other learners and teachers throughout the world. Although Internet use is supervised in our school, families should be aware that some students may find ways to access material that is inaccurate, defamatory, illegal, or potentially offensive to some people. We believe that the benefits to students from access to the Internet, in the form of information resources and opportunities for collaboration, exceed any disadvantages. However, as with any other area, parents and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources. The school therefore supports and respects each family's right to decide whether or not to apply for access.

During school, teachers will guide students towards appropriate material. At home, families bear the same responsibility for guidance as they exercise with other information sources such as television, telephones, films and radio.

I enclose a copy of the **Rules for responsible Internet use** that we operate at this school. We also have a number of leaflets from national bodies that explain issues further and also cover Internet use at home. If you would like copies of these, please contact the school.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of Internet use (or to see a lesson in operation), please telephone me to arrange an appointment.

If you decide to support your child's application for access to the Internet, please complete the enclosed form and return it to me by the end of term.

Yours sincerely,

Schools should enclose their Acceptable Use Policy with this letter.

This booklet has been produced with expert advice and assistance from Childnet International, the children's Internet charity.

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers would also like to thank the British Educational and Communications Technology Agency (BECTA) for giving permission for sections of the 'Superhighway Safety' pack to be adapted for this booklet.

Please note that, while every effort has been made to ensure up to date and accurate information, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) cannot assume responsibility for the accuracy of any information contained in the websites suggested in this booklet. The inclusion of a website address does not reflect an endorsement by ATL of any products, services or organisations contained within that website.

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