

GEORGE ROMNEY JUNIOR SCHOOL



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Dear parents, carers and families,

Our Y3/Y4 classes did a great job this week planting a new native hedgerow here at school. Working with volunteers from the Woodland Trust and Furness Rotary, we planted over 100 saplings yesterday. When fully grown, the new hedge will provide a fantastic environment for nature to thrive. Next week, the Y5/Y6 children will be planting some woodland copses in other parts of the school ground!

As I mentioned in last week's newsletter – we are celebrating Children's Mental Health Awareness Week next week. I am sure by now you have heard about the activity your child's class has chosen! We are having special assemblies and lessons next week to try to help all children understand that like good physical health, how important good mental health is!

Tuesday 8th February is also Safer Internet Day. This is a day where schools and other organisations focus on the key messages around how to stay safe and happy online. You will have noticed that throughout the year, we send home posters and information sheets linked to this through our partnership with the National Online Safety group. As part of our membership, we are able to offer a free membership/subscription service (which includes videos and other resources for parents) to all our parents and carers to the National Online Safety group. If this is something you would be interested in, please send an email either to myself or to Mrs Gallagher in the school office and we can send you more information! I have attached a selection of their posters and information sheets to this letter for you to look at.

Take care, stay safe,

DR

David Reddy
(Headteacher)



10 Top Tips for Respect Online: A DIGITAL WORLD FOR EVERYONE

Even before lockdowns inflamed the situation, one in every five 10- to 15-year-olds was experiencing bullying online: abusive messages, having rumours spread about them or being excluded from group chats, for example. Through smartphones and tablets, we're used to being able to communicate from anywhere, at any time – but digital devices became commonplace so quickly that it caused a problem: as a society, we haven't properly adjusted to how different they've made life. Our tips can help you to build positive relationships online and avoid some of the potential issues.

WHAT IS NETIQUETTE?

Etiquette is a set of rules to help us interact with others: like a code of respect. People follow this code every day (mostly without even thinking about it) and it can help us decide how to act in certain situations. 'Netiquette' (etiquette on the net – we see what they did there!) is the same, except it's designed to help us interact with others online, which is sometimes a whole different ball game.

1 SEE THE OTHER SIDE

Usually when we're online, we can't use the other person's body language or tone of voice to give us clues about what we can say to them, or how to say it. Try to think what the situation might be like for them, how they're feeling and whether we'd say the same thing if they were actually there with us.

2 HIT THE PAUSE BUTTON

Without a person physically there in front of us, it's easy to send something quickly – before we've really thought about whether it's helpful or kind. Just because we can do things quickly doesn't mean we should; it's better to pause for a second and think it through, instead of simply reacting.

3 MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

People have invented loads of different ways to communicate online (emojis, abbreviations like LOL, TBH and so on). Some of these can be triggering to other people (such as USING CAPS SO IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE SHOUTING!), so it's important to stay aware of the style of language you're using.

4 BE SURE BEFORE YOU POST

On social networks like Instagram or Facebook, vast numbers of people might see what you've posted. So if that's something negative about a person, it can feel hugely painful for them. If you're ever tempted to post something like that, ask yourself "do I really need to go public with this?"

5 PROTECT YOURSELF

Always think very carefully before sharing any personal information with someone else or in a group. Once something's been put online, the sender loses any control over where it goes and who might see it. If you've got any uncertainty at all, it's a good idea to talk to a trusted adult about this first.

6 KINDNESS IS CATCHING

Negative communication can spread rapidly online, but so can being kind and helpful (this happened quite a lot during lockdowns, for instance). A friendly, positive message can make a big difference to someone as well as helping us feel good about ourselves – so share the love!

7 WAITING CAN BE HARD

When we've sent a message or posted something online, waiting for a reply or for someone to respond can make us anxious. It could be helpful to think whether you really have to message or post right now – or if you could wait until a better time when it will cause you less anxiety.

8 THE NET LOVES ATTENTION

Most apps, games and sites use sophisticated technology that's designed to keep us coming back for more. It's important to keep this in mind when you feel the need to reach for your phone, tablet or console – once we understand this fact, it becomes easier to control how we use our digital devices.

9 REPLY WISELY

Sometimes it's tempting to fire back an instant response to a post or message we don't like. How we respond is important, however – whether we reply privately to the person or on a platform where lots of people will see it, for example, makes a big difference to how whoever is receiving the message will deal with it.

10 FORGIVE AND FORGET

Even though we try to avoid them, mistakes can – and do – happen online. They can sometimes feel like a bigger deal than they actually are. It's important to remember that we're all only human, and sometimes we mess up. Learn to forgive others and – just as importantly – to forgive yourself.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Carole Francis-Smith is an experienced counselling psychologist who, through her research, specialises in promoting safe and ethical online communications. She consults with businesses and organisations to support positive and effective communication online, often by considering some of the more hidden aspects of the mediums.



Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/journals/articles/online-safety-research> and https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345643_the_online_communication_effect

