



ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



Online safety at home

With the majority of our young people learning from home recently, they have been spending more time online doing their school work, playing games or socialising. Technology is hugely valuable for education, as well as a way to keep in touch with friends and family. However it's important we all consider how we can help keep our young people safer online not only during lockdown, but always. You can view the results of the recent [Online Student Survey](#) completed by our young people here at St Thomas More and attached is some further information about what your child may enjoy online and what you can do to help keep them safer:

Social media

You may be wondering when is the best age to let your child have a social media account, or have some concerns if they're already using them. For advice and guidance, read [Is your child ready for social media?](#)

Remember, most social media services require users to be at least 13 years of age before they can register.

Most young people have positive experiences socialising online, but it can be easy for young people to share things or post things they wish they hadn't.

The simplest way to have information about your child removed from a website, or app is to contact the site itself. Read [reporting to social media sites](#) for more information.

Social media can offer young people opportunities to express themselves and have fun, but they could be exposed to harmful content which might include sexual images or videos which could impact on their understanding of sex and relationships.

For information, read [Teens and the sexual content on social media](#).

Online gaming

Online games are social activities, and most have features that allow young people to chat with others whilst they play.

For information about the positives of gaming, the risks of 'in-game chat' and measures you can take to help protect them, watch this short video: [In-game chat: a guide for parents and carers](#).

The PEGI (Pan European Game Information) rating system can be a useful tool to help you decide what online games are appropriate for your child.

For more information on the PEGI system and other factors to consider before deciding what's suitable, read [Gaming: what's appropriate for your child](#)

Gaming is popular with both children and adults and can help to cure that lockdown boredom! If your child is gaming, you may have some questions about how to keep them safer. If so, check out - [gaming: what parents need to know](#).

For a guide on the apps, sites and games your child might enjoy, visit: [Net Aware](#).



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Sharing information, images and videos

Young people often share images or 'selfies' and there is potential for some of those to be nude or nearly nude images. Young people share 'nudes' for a number of different reasons, and some situations are more risky than others.

For information about the contexts in which images are shared and how best to respond, take a look at [nude selfies: a parents guide](#).

If your child enjoys being online and uses social media apps, games and more, it's important you know how to protect their personal information and support them to make safe choices about what they share online.

Read this [parents guide to personal information](#) and [how to protect it](#) for more information to support your child.

Some of the most popular apps, sites and games are designed to make it easy to share information online. But once information is shared, you can never be sure who has seen it, saved it or shared it.

If your child has shared something online they wish they hadn't – don't panic. Read [my child has shared too much online](#) for advice on how to support your child.

**The 'Golden Rule' when sharing online is:
Would they be happy if it was shared on a Billboard**

Livestreaming

Live streaming is now a very popular feature of many apps and platforms, and all you need to livestream is an internet enabled device like a laptop or a smart phone.

If your child enjoys livestreaming, you may want to read [what is livestreaming](#) to find out more about it and help your child have a positive online experience.

Over the past few months, many of you may have watched a livestream, or taken part in a video chat. Livestreaming can be a fun and enjoyable online activity for young people.

If you want to know more about livestreaming, the risks and safe use, watch this short video: [video](#) or download this [handy guide](#).



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Steps you can take to help keep your child safer online

Parental controls: Parental controls have been designed to help you manage your child's online activities. There are various types, some of which are free but others which can be bought. However, nothing is totally fool proof so they shouldn't replace the need for you to support and advise your child using the internet. For more information and step by step instructions on setting up parental controls, visit [Parental Controls & Privacy Settings Guides - Internet Matters](#).

Have an ongoing conversation: Continue to talk about the apps, games and sites they like to use, and what they like and don't like and any concerns about being online. Discuss with them when to unfollow, block or report. For help starting this conversation, read [having a conversation with your child](#).

Be non-judgemental: Explain that you would never blame them for anything that might happen online, and you will always give them calm, loving support.

Make sure they know where to go for support: Remind your child they can always speak to you or a trusted adult if anything happens online that makes them feel worried or upset. For a breakdown of report services, visit: [Supporting your child with reporting unwanted content online](#)

Make sure they know about NCA CEOP: Young people can report a concern about grooming or sexual abuse to NCA CEOP at <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> and get support from a specialist Child Protection Advisor.

Talk about how their online actions can affect others: If your child is engaging with peers online, remind them to consider how someone else might feel before they post or share something. If they are considering sharing a photo/video of somebody else, they should always ask permission first.

Tell them about Thinkuknow: The website provide open and honest guidance for young people on friends, relationships and the internet, covering topics like dealing with pressure; consent; and getting support when you're worried. Visit the [website for 11-13's](#) or the [website for 14+](#) for age appropriate information.

Direct your child to age appropriate information about relationships and sex: It's natural for young people to start exploring their feelings online and adolescents are more inclined to take risks. It's important to understand this and to talk to your child in a positive, encouraging and safe way. [Thinkuknow](#), [The Mix](#) and [Childline](#) all provide age appropriate information about relationships that you can signpost your child to.