**Online Safety Advice for Parents and Carers April 2018**

All pupils at Lowton West recently received the latest copy of the Digital Parenting Magazine packed with helpful tips and advice for pupils and parents. Here is some further advice relating to live streaming and Roblox online gaming.

**Live Streaming: understanding the risks**

Live streaming is a popular feature online. With its popularity ever increasing and with children and adults both taking part, it is important as a parent or carer to understand what risks children and young people may face when live streaming and the practical steps that you can take to make your child’s online experience safer. By understanding the risks of live streaming you can help your child stay safe online.

**What is live streaming?**

Live streaming is a live visual broadcast over the internet.  All you need to be able to live stream is an internet enabled device, like a smart phone or tablet, and a platform (such as website or app) to broadcast on. At the click of a button, you can be streaming to hundreds, or thousands, of viewers. Live streaming can be found on many popular social media platforms such as Facebook (Facebook live) and Instagram (live video).

**What makes live streaming risky for children and young people?**

**Reduced inhibition online** – Children, like adults, can feel more confident when they are online as they feel somewhat protected by the screen. This can result in children engaging in behaviour that they would not otherwise do in ‘real life’.

**Live streaming is ‘in the moment’** – Children and young people often do things in the heat of the moment and act on impulse without thinking of the consequences – just like offline. For example, they may share personal information when asked or do things that in another situation they wouldn’t do, such as share something private. Our work with young people has shown that they often do not see live streaming as something tangible and so they may share things that they wouldn’t share via a photo or pre-recorded video.

**Tactics such as trickery and flattery** – Offenders use tactics to try and get children to do things that they otherwise may not do. In their offline world, children are often taught from an early age to do as they are told and follow adult instruction e.g. parents, teachers, family friends. Some offenders within live streaming platforms rely on the acceptance of this ‘rule’ and use young people’s trust in adults to abuse them. Live streaming platforms also often allow users to ‘gift’ emoji’s such as love hearts and coins and this can enable adults to manipulate young people into doing things through flattery and the promise of gifts.

**Affirmation in abundance** – Lots of positive comments and compliments can make children feel good. Primary aged children tend to want to please others and can be tricked into doing things by the threat of losing their followers (the people watching and commenting on their live stream).

**What is Roblox?**

Roblox is an interactive platform for play that allows children to imagine, create, and play together in immersive 3D worlds. All the games and experiences on Roblox have been created by the players themselves. Once a player has signed up and created an avatar, they are given their own piece of real estate along with a virtual toolbox (known as “Roblox Studio”) for building. They can monetise their creations to earn “Robux” (the virtual currency on Roblox), which can then be used to purchase more avatar accessories or additional abilities in one of the millions of experiences available on the platform.

**Why is it such a risk to children?**

The biggest safety issue with this game is the social interaction amongst players. The purpose of Roblox is for players to interact and make friends. This is achieved by wandering around the online world and stopping to talk with other players within an unmoderated chat feature. Like any online multiplayer game, there is little or no control over the types of people or age limits of those playing the game. Despite the fact that strict chat filters can be activated - blocking inappropriate words and phrases - children are still susceptible to being targeted by online predators. Social games such as Roblox are often used as a platform to lure children away from the game and onto other platforms: eg., Facebook, Snapchat and even in some cases Skype.

Roblox appeals directly children under 12, easy targets who can lack the ability to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate requests. The game invites players to explore imaginary worlds of all kinds. Some of these are sexual in nature.

"The chat function poses a real danger to children playing this popular game," explains psychologist Jordan Foster, a leading Cyber Expert at Family Zone. "With limited safety measures embedded within the game, children are open prey for predators to communicate with. "Consider it similar to sending a child out into a real room filled with strangers, with no barriers in place to stop people being able to talk to whomever they like.”

**How can you help your child stay safe when live streaming?**

There are some practical steps you can take to help keep your child safe if they are using an app or website with a live streaming function.

**Stay involved in their internet use**– Talk to your child about what they are doing online; what they are enjoying, what they are learning, who are they interacting with and the new things they have discovered. Parental engagement in the positive aspect of being online and not just the risky things will help your child to talk more openly about their internet use, including anything that worries them. Having these discussions often is more effective than having ‘one big chat’.

**Use webcam and devices in public spaces**. As young people develop, they often seek more privacy and autonomy in both their online and offline world. However, it’s important to consider whether children are developmentally ready to be left unsupervised using devices. Young children do not have reasoning skills to keep themselves safe independently, especially when overpowered by the intelligence and manipulation of offenders. A known risk factor is when children use live streaming platforms in their bedroom or bathrooms unsupervised. Therefore, it’s important that if primary aged children are using apps with any communication function that they are being supervised by an adult and are not in a private space.

**Privacy and safety settings** -  If your child is using an app with a live streaming function go through the privacy and safety settings together, setting them to make sure only the friends they know in ‘real life’ can view their profile.

**Be wary of requests to chat in private** – Offenders may try and move children from a public area of an app to a private area to have conversations that are likely to be less moderated. Remind your child to be wary of people they meet online who want to chat to them in a private away from other people.

**Build resilience -**You can help build your child’s resilience and self-esteem through conversations and activities that are not based on validation from online ‘fans’ or views. For primary aged children this can include highlighting when your child has been nice or kind to a sibling or friend.

**Safe and trusted adults and advice -**Help your child to identify adults that are there to help from ones who they do not know or that may want something in return. As your child gets older they may look to the internet for information and advice. Support them to identify trusted sources on the internet, versus places where they should be more cautious. Reinforce the idea that on the internet, adults should be offering advice and supporting young people to make their own choices, usually via professional and well known organisations.

**Make sure your child knows where to go for support and where to report** - Children can sometimes feel they are to blame if something goes wrong online. Remind your child that they can always speak to you or an adult they trust if they are worried no matter what may have happened. Talk to them about reporting directly within the app or platform they are using and that they can report to CEOP if they’re concerned about contact from an adult.

## Reporting to CEOP

If you are worried about someone your child is in contact with online, you can find information and advice on how to report these concerns directly to CEOP by visiting the online [CEOP Safety Centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/).  If you feel your child at immediate risk please contact the police.

We hope you have found the information provided useful.

Kind regards,

Mrs Gould

This update includes the latest guidance from the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP) which can be accessed using the following links:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/live-streaming-responding-to-the-risks/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/what-is-live-streaming/>

Further information regarding online chat and staying safe online is available from the Think U Know website <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Concerned-about-your-child/Online-contact-and-staying-safe/>