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Reading School

Information for parents and carers

The purpose of this guide

Your son is increasingly using Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in school and in the home.

This guide explains:
How he is using ICT at Reading School.
How he can use the Internet safely at home.
How using ICT in the home can help him in his learning.
Where he can access further information to be safe online.

How your son uses ICT at Reading School

ICT in schools is taught as a subject in its own right and also supports students' learning in many other subjects, including English and Mathematics. Both within ICT lessons and other subjects, students learn to use a wide range of ICT including:

Word Processing to write essays, news articles or letters
Databases to record information, e.g. GCSE data handling projects
Spreadsheets to create tables, charts and graphs
Desktop Publishing to design posters, leaflets or cards
Multimedia Presentation to present text, pictures, sound and video
Drawing Programs to create pictures and designs in Art and Technology lessons
Internet using browsers to access research for project work
Email to contact friends in another school and email coursework to teachers
Blogs to find set work, leave a message or to upload their completed coursework
Social Networking sites such a s Twitter to discuss issues raised in their lesson that day
Digital Cameras to record images or movie clips what they have done on a field trip
Electronic Sensors to record changes in light, sound and temperature
Programming software to give instructions and make something happen
Game Making software to create imaginative and challenging games for others to play
Simulations and Models to explore real and imaginary situations
Website Publishing to create their own interactive websites
Video Conferencing to share ideas or ask an expert.

How you can help your son at home

ICT is not just about using a computer. It also includes the use of mobile phones, tablets, digital cameras, MP3 players and other hand held devices. Students can be helped to develop their ICT skills at home by:

- writing a letter or email to a friend or relative
- creating digital artwork and pictures
- using the Internet to do research for a project
- using an online simulation to develop problem solving
- using interactive games to enhance their learning

A selection of companies offer their school software for use at home.

SAFETY

Benefits of using ICT at home

How we know that using ICT at home can help
Many studies have looked at the benefits of having access to a computer and/or the Internet at home. Here are some of the key findings:

- used effectively, ICT can improve students' achievement
- using ICT at home and at school develops skills for life
- students with supportive and involved parents and carers do better at school
- students enjoy using ICT
- using ICT provides a wider and more flexible range of learning materials.

Home use of ICT by students

- improves their ICT skills and makes learning more fun
- offers them choice in what they learn and how they learn it
- supports homework and revision
- improves the presentation of their work
- seamlessly connects learning at school with learning at home.

All this can lead to better performance at school and an improved standard of work.

Using the Internet safely at home

Whilst many Internet Service Providers offer filtering systems and tools to help you safeguard your son or daughter at home, it remains surprisingly easy for young people to access inappropriate material including unsuitable text, pictures and movies. Locating the computer in a family area where possible, not in a bedroom, will enable you to supervise your son or daughter as they use the Internet Also consider mobile phones and games consoles and other devices that can access the internet. However, don't deny them the opportunity to learn from and enjoy the wide variety of material and games available on the Internet. Instead discuss with them some simple rules for keeping safe online and making sure they understand their importance.

Using the Internet safely at home

To keep safe they should:
- use websites recommended by teachers and use a student friendly search engine
- consider who created a website and possible bias within information
- email only people they know (why not consider setting up an address book?)
- exercise caution before opening an email sent by someone they don't know
- use Internet chat rooms, websites, instant messaging etc with caution and know how to block and report unwanted users
- not use their real name when using games or websites on the Internet, (create a nick name)
- never give out any personal information about themselves, friends or family online including home address, phone or mobile number
- never email your school name or a picture in school uniform (even to a friend)
- never arrange to meet anyone alone, and always tell an adult first and meet in a public place
- only use a webcam with people they know
- tell an adult they trust immediately if they encounter anything they are unhappy with
- report concerns to the Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (CEOP)
- avoid using websites they feel they could not tell you about
- be aware comments they make on Blogs and Wikis can be viewed by others

Using these guidelines

Go through these guidelines with your son and pin them up near to the computer. It is also a good idea to regularly check the Internet sites they are visiting e.g. by clicking on History and Favourites. Please reassure them that you want to keep them safe rather than take Internet access away from them. Create a dialogue and a relationship of mutual respect as far as the Internet is concerned.

For further information go to: CEOP www.ceop.gov.uk

Some useful websites

CEOP: www.ceop.gov.uk
Think U Know: www.thinkuknow.co.uk
Digizen: www.digizen.org