

Protecting Children Online

Teachers' Perspectives on eSafety

Summary Report



Findings from a study conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research on behalf of Vital.

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January 2012

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Part funded by
Department for
Education

Delivered by



The Open University

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The survey data shows that the majority of teachers can confidently deal with most e-safety issues and support their pupils to do so. Many teachers acknowledged that technology can be useful to their pupils, for example they felt mobile phones are good for emergencies and social networking sites can facilitate pupils' communication with their friends. However, our findings also show that technology is creating challenges for teachers. This is in relation to issues around e-safety and cyberbullying as well as managing pupils' usage of particular technologies, such as smartphones and social networking sites.

Given the pace at which new technologies are being developed, and pupils' enthusiasm for using new technologies, having a regularly updated **e-safety policy** that provides a clear framework for guiding and managing pupils' use of technology is important. Nearly nine in ten (87%) teachers said that their school has an e-safety policy, but only seven in ten (72%) indicated that it is reviewed regularly, suggesting that more work needs to be done with schools in this area. This is particularly the case in secondary schools, where the proportion of teachers responding that their school has an e-safety policy was lower.

Encouragingly, the vast majority of teachers felt that their pupils have the **skills and knowledge** to use the internet safely at school. However, only three-fifths (58%) of teachers felt that pupils had the skills and knowledge of use the internet safely at *home*. This suggests that pupils need more education and support to ensure that they use the internet safely outside of school, where there is less supervision and potentially more online freedom. Communication with teachers and parents about how best to support this learning would be useful.

Over three-quarters (77%) of primary teachers and half (54%) of secondary teachers felt that staff had received adequate **e-safety training**. Indeed, most teachers felt confident about advising pupils on different aspects of e-safety. The safe use of social networking sites was the area of e-safety that proportionally fewest teachers were confident to advise pupils on. These findings imply that a significant minority of teachers, particularly within the secondary phase of education, want or need more training on e-safety. We would expect this to result in greater proportions of teachers feeling confident in giving advice to pupils on all facets on e-safety.

Given the growing ownership of **smartphones**, Vital were keen for the survey to investigate teachers' views of mobile phones. 85% of secondary teachers said that many of their pupils carried mobile phones with internet access, compared with only 7% of primary teachers. Given this variation by phase, it is unsurprising that while secondary teachers were proportionally more likely than primary teachers to see the benefit of

pupils having a mobile phone for emergencies, they were also much more inclined to agree that mobile phone use within school is problematic. More than nine in ten secondary teachers thought that controlling mobile phone use within school was difficult. This suggests that secondary teachers would particularly welcome advice on managing pupils' use of mobile phones within school.

Many teachers (59%) have a **social networking** profile themselves, and less than 1% have experienced pupils leaving inappropriate comments on their profile. Teachers do not encourage pupils to contact them via social networking sites, with only 1% happy for their pupils to contact them in this way. A third (33%) of primary teachers and three-quarters (78 %) of secondary teachers felt that many of their pupils spend too much time on such sites. Across both phases of education, most teachers felt that access to these sites should be banned during the school day. Teachers are therefore likely to find advice on how to manage pupils' attraction to social networking sites useful and relevant.

The survey findings on **cyberbullying** give a clear indication that communication with teachers should focus on both bullying of teachers and pupils, particularly in the secondary phase on education. While only 3% of teachers said that they had been cyberbullied by pupils, a third of secondary and 7% of primary respondents said that one of their colleagues had been. The picture amongst pupils was markedly worse, with 91% of secondary teachers and 52% of primary teachers reporting that pupils at their school have experienced cyberbullying. By far the most common form of cyberbullying was via social networking sites, irrespective of whether teachers or pupils were the intended victims, suggesting that cyberbullying advice should explicitly consider the use of this technology.

Across the report, we have commented on the regional variation in teachers' responses. However, a clear pattern of regional differences in responses did not emerge from the survey data.