



Dear Parents,

Lisnagry N.S. is committed to promoting safe and responsible use of the internet for our pupils both at home and at school. While in school we educate the children through the SPHE programme and Webwise lessons, you their primary educators also need to take responsibility. We need to ensure they can enjoy technology without putting themselves and others at risk. I'm sure you'll agree, that by working together, we can help our children understand how important it is for their own online wellbeing and to be mindful of what they share, say and upload.

The 2019 annual report from Cybersafe Ireland published on 10<sup>th</sup> September shows that 31% of children have gamed online with people they do not know and 30% of children have friends or followers on social media platforms who are strangers. According to the report, 26% of primary school aged children have played an over 18's video game, a figure which rose to 39% with boys. These are very worrying statistics. We cannot pretend that this would not happen to our children, regardless of how closely we monitor their mobile phone use. The report can be viewed on [www.cybersafeireland.org/parents](http://www.cybersafeireland.org/parents).

Increasing numbers of our children have smartphones and are using TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram and other media sharing platforms. It is part of their everyday lives but not always for the better. Children don't realise that there are real life consequences for poor online choices. It doesn't occur to them that what they post online can be copied, saved and forwarded to others and remain long after the original has been deleted. It is important that we teach children how to behave online themselves. If they were rude to somebody "face to face" you would talk them about it. It is really important they are taught social skills and manners online too, especially because there is no body language or tone. They feel anonymous when they create screen names and online personas that can be totally different than who they are in real life. They get swept along with what their peers are doing and lose awareness of the many dangers they are facing. As parents, it is important to be aware of the digital age of consent for these platforms and to take responsibility if your child is using them if they are underage.

**We have invited Ger Brick, a very experienced facilitator in this field to do a zoom internet safety class with our 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils next Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October.**

Ger does very interactive and fun online workshops providing children with practical information and rules for staying safe and behaving responsibly online.

Also, I have attached a snapchat and tiktok guide for parents to help you empower your children to protect themselves online. We urge you to become more involved in your child's online life as it has become a much bigger part of their everyday lives.

Yours sincerely,

MICHAEL FEENEY

