

7 Dec 17

To all parents of primary school children

*Dear parents,*

As we approach the end of the school term we are seeking your support to help address a difficult issue which is beginning to impact our primary school children. The issue is broadly about how we safeguard our children from inappropriate materials and influence through electronic media – computer games, DVDs and internet browsing. It is a sensitive subject and, whilst it is not our place to tell parents how to bring up their children, we have a duty to respond when issues emerge in the school setting.

Recent comments during school lessons and inappropriate playground games have revealed that an increasing number of young children are regularly playing and experiencing computer games and films which involve extreme violence, sexualised content, abusive language and adult decision making. There is a particular problem with some primary school children being allowed to play games such as Grand Theft Auto (18 cert), Call of Duty (18 cert), 5 Nights at Freddy's (horror), Chucky (horror) and Episode (interactive). This is then linked to unacceptable behaviour at school where these games are discussed in conversation and re-enacted at playtime. It is scaring and confusing other children and is disruptive in lessons. Put frankly, topics which include murder, torture and abuse should not be part of a primary school setting.

The second area of concern is access by primary school children to social networking and gaming sites (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, Musical.ly, SnapChat). Most social networking sites require users to be at least 13 before they create an account as there is considerable risk to young children including exposure to inappropriate content and grooming.

The schools are playing their part through sensible education and e-safety lessons, supported by the Be Safe On Island team and community police officers. However, as parents, we have the main responsibility for keeping our young children safe and controlling access to inappropriate materials.

We would encourage all parents to spend some time discussing internet use and safe gaming with their children and then come up with an agreement about what is acceptable. Parents may be unaware of the extreme content of some of the materials their children are accessing. Similarly, parents may not be actively using parental controls and settings which can be applied to both devices and internet access points. We have listed below some useful resources to help you understand the issue and help is also available through our community police officers.

**Please let's all work together to keep our children safe.** Should you have any concerns then ask to speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead through the school office.

Signed

Gp Capt Tony Radcliffe – Chair of the BFC Local Safeguarding Children Board

Gp Capt Mike Blackburn – Chair of the Akrotiri Primary School Governors' Committee

Nat Baker – Chair of the Ayios Nikolaos Primary School Governors' Committee

Chris Charnock – Chair of the Dhekelia Primary School Governors' Committee

Andi Reid – Chair of the Episkopi Primary School Governors' Committee

**Useful Links:**

NSPCC – Online Safety: (<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>)

ChildNet – downloadable leaflets: <http://www.childnet.com/blog/free-internet-safety-leaflets-for-parents-2016>

Net Aware - this site provides information and gives safety ratings on all of the popular apps: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

Think U Know – guides to online exploitation: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>