

Foreword

We live in a time when, due to influences of information and communications technology, the way our children live their lives is constantly changing. Nowhere is this more evident than with young people's use of the Internet. The ease of access to powerful communication tools such as social networking websites, video and photograph sharing sites, and camera-phones means that, all over the world, various people are saying new things in new ways to new audiences. Individuals are sharing ideas and views on a panoramic scale in ways that, until recently, were only open to broadcasters.

However, alongside the tremendous opportunities provided by technology, there are also challenges. Many young people approach online content in the same way that they read a book - they believe most of what they look-up online. In schools we need to foster the critical and analytical skills that can harness the positive aspects of the information media we now have access to at the click of a mouse. In short, we need to promote digital literacy.

Digital literacy is not simply about developing skills to use technology or to validate online content. Email, instant messaging, texting, and Bebo are allowing Irish children to connect with each other and engage with society in ways that were unimaginable two years ago. We are also seeing how the anonymous, instant, and far reaching communication capabilities of the Internet have brought a new dimension to child protection issues such as bullying, anorexia, suicide, and sexual exploitation.

Consequently, young people children need to develop skills to establish supportive relationships, to enjoy the company of others, and to resolve conflicts in appropriate ways. They need to be aware of and sensitive to their role in influencing the behaviour of others through their online lives. Students require the skills to identify when they are subject to influence or manipulation, whether overt or subtle, and the self-confidence to resist these pressures.

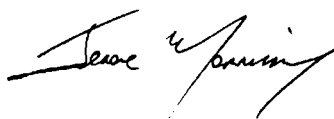
Through discussion and group techniques this programme addresses the life-skills associated with personal safety, social responsibility, ethical and human rights in the context of the wide use of the Internet by young people. This approach enables students to learn from their peers and establish ethical codes of practice for themselves by themselves.

The NCTE is the Irish Internet Safety awareness and is responsible for the Webwise Internet Safety awareness campaign in schools (www.webwise.ie). In partnership with Childline and the National Parents Council Primary, it operates an Internet Safety helpline for children and provides a panel of experts to parents associations and schools across the country to deliver information seminars and training to parents. Continuing professional development in Internet Safety is also provided to teachers through the local ICT Advisory Service.

The NCTE and the SPHE Support Service have worked together, in a very positive way to develop these Internet Safety education educational resources to be used by schools in implementing the SPHE curriculum in the Junior Cycle. This learning programme empowers students to reflect upon their own safety, read, analyse, and decode Internet content, it also promotes the use of Internet technologies as instruments of self-expression and creativity, and equips adolescents to use the Internet to engage safely, effectively and responsibly with their local, national and global communities.

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This teachers' resource pack will provide practical guidance on the embedding of Internet Safety messages in classrooms. I believe that the exemplar lessons, the resources and teaching materials will provide comprehensive support for teachers to help them guide and protect their students and to enable our young people to be wiser and safer Internet users.



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