



# Parent Information on Internet Usage



Footscray West Primary School (FWPS) uses the Internet as a teaching and learning tool. We see the Internet as a valuable resource but acknowledge it must be used responsibly.

Your child has been asked to agree to use the Internet responsibly at school. Parents should be aware that the nature of the Internet means that full protection from inappropriate content can never be guaranteed.

At FWPS we:

- provide a filtered Internet service
- provide access to the Victorian Education Channel ([www.education.vic.gov.au/primary](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/primary)) a search engine that can be used to restrict students to only using websites that have been teacher recommended and reviewed
- provide supervision and direction in Internet activities
- work towards setting tasks that ask your child open questions, so they can't copy and paste all answers from the Internet
- reinforce the importance of safe and respectful use of the Internet
- provide support to parents to understand this agreement

Here are some possible scenarios your child might encounter when using the Internet. In order to help your child fully understand their responsibilities online, we ask you to discuss these with your child.

We also recommend that you read and follow the "Bridging the gap between home and school" information to help you understand how your child may be using the Internet at home or sometime in the future.

Questions for parent/ student discussion:

While you were working a sign flashed. You clicked and now you have forgotten what you were supposed to do.

Someone keeps messaging nasty and upsetting comments about you and your friends.

**What do you do?**

A person you have met online asks you to give them your full name and phone number and suggests you meet. What if you have chatted with them for a long time and know them really well?

A great game online will only let you play it if you fill in the box with your full personal details.

A friend tells you about a great site where there is "free" music to download.

## **For Parents: Bridging the gap between home and school**

At school the Internet is mostly used to support teaching and learning. At home, however, it is often used differently. Not only is it a study resource for students, but it is increasingly being used as a social space to meet, play and chat. The Internet can be lots of fun.

If you have the Internet at home, encourage your child to show you what they are doing online.

At home we recommend you:

- make some time to sit with your child to find out how they are using the Internet and who else is involved in any online activities
- encourage the use of online devices in shared spaces rather than private spaces– not your child's bedroom
- ask questions when your child shows you what they are doing, such as:
  - how does it work and how do you set it up?
  - who else is sharing this space or game? Did you know them before or did you “meet” them online?
  - why is this so enjoyable – what makes it fun?
  - can you see any risks or dangers in the activity? What would you say to warn/inform a younger child?
  - what are you doing to protect yourself or your friends from these potential dangers?
  - when would you inform an adult about an incident that has happened online that concerns you? Discuss why your child might keep it to themselves.

Statistics show that students will not approach an adult for help because:

- they might get the blame for any incident
- they don't think adults “get” their online stuff – it is for students only
- they might put at risk their own access to technology by either:
  - admitting to a mistake or
  - highlighting a situation that might lead a parent to ban their access.

## **What has your child agreed to and why?**

**Not giving out personal details or details of other students including full names, telephone numbers, addresses and images and protecting password details.**

Students can be approached, groomed, and bullied online. They also love to publish information about themselves and their friends.

We recommend they:

- don't use their own name, but develop an online name and use avatars.
- don't share personal details including images of themselves or their friends online
- password protect any spaces or accounts they have and protect that password.
- don't allow anyone they don't know to join their chat or collaborative space.
- are reminded that any image or comment they put on the Internet is now public (anyone can see, change or use it)

**Being respectful online and not participating in online bullying**

The online environment sometimes feels different. The language is different. Sometimes students say things online that they would never say to someone's face.

- being online can make students feel that they are anonymous
- the space or chat they use in leisure time might have explicit language and they will feel they have to be part of it
- often the online environment has very few adults.

**Using the technology at school for learning, using the equipment properly and not interfering with the work or data of another student.**

By just taking care with the equipment, printing and downloading from the Internet students can save time, money and the environment. Students often see the Internet as “free”. Just looking at a page on the Internet is a download and is charged somewhere.

**Not bringing or downloading unauthorised programs, including games, to the school or run them on school computers**

The school connects all of the computers through a network. The introduction of unknown games or files could introduce viruses etc and these put all of the school's equipment and student work at risk.

**Not go looking for rude or offensive sites.**

Filters block a lot of inappropriate content but it is not foolproof. For students who deliberately seek out inappropriate content or use technology that bypasses filters, parents will be immediately informed and the student's Internet access will be reviewed.

**Using the Internet at school to learn.**

It is important to realise that there is a time for fun and a time for work (even on the Internet). Staying on task on the internet will reduce risk of inappropriate access and teach students strategies to use the Internet for their learning.

**Remembering the content on the web as someone else's property and asking teacher to help get permission before using information or pictures**

All music, information, images and games on the Internet are owned by someone. A term called copyright is a legal one and has laws to enforce it.

By downloading a freebie you can risk bringing a virus or spyware to the computer or system. These can destroy a computer system or provide hackers with details such as passwords and bank accounts.

Remember if an offer is too good to be true, the chances are it is!

**Thinking carefully about what is on the Internet, questioning if it is from a reliable source and using the information to help answer questions.**

Not everything on the Internet is true, accurate or unbiased.

The school is teaching information literacy skills, which enables students to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively on the Internet.

Copying and pasting information can help organise arguments, ideas, and information but it is important that your child uses their own thoughts and language to express what they have learnt. If helping with homework, ask open-ended questions. For example, saying to a student "Tell me about wombats" might encourage him/her to copy and paste facts about the wombat, but asking the question "What would a day in the life of a wombat be like?" encourages the student to think about different aspects of the animals life and draw together the different pieces of information they might have discovered.

**Talk to my teacher or another adult if:**

- I need help online
- I am not sure what I should be doing on the Internet
- I come across sites which are not suitable for our school
- someone writes something I don't like, or makes me and my friends feel uncomfortable or asks me to provide information that I know is private.
- I feel that the welfare of other students at the school is being threatened by online activities

The Internet has some really flashy and tricky ways to lead people into websites they never meant to visit. It is easy for us all to get distracted. We want students to ask for help in locating the information they need, and clarifying the task they have been set. Unfocused clicking through websites can lead to inappropriate content.

We also want the whole school community to keep their Internet environment as safe as possible so we ask that if your child sees a site they think should be blocked, to turn off their screen and let a teacher know.

Open communication between parents, teachers and students is the best way to keep students safe. Students will often share concerns with each other online. It is important that they tell a teacher and or parent when they are feeling uncomfortable or threatened online.

If you have any concerns about this agreement or Internet Safety in general contact either the school or the contact below

Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) on 1800 880 176 or

<http://www.acma.gov.au/Citizen>

More information for parent's is available at

<http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Parents/Resources/Educate%20yourself.aspx>