![e-safety adviser logo]

e-Safety Newsletter

Using Social Media
In Education

18 Rated Games
Reporting to Police?

Bits n Bytes
Useful links

![e-safety adviser logo]

A message from
Alan Mackenzie

Alan is a consultant who has worked in the education sector for many years. Previously the service manager for 350 schools and also leading on internet safety, he has a deep understanding of the needs and frustrations of schools.

Alan now works for himself, in partnership or collaborating with many others, across the country helping and advising schools, charities and other organizations with a particular focus on e-safety.

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Continuing the theme of the last newsletter, this time I want to take a look at using social media in education.

To some, it may seem a little strange considering using social networks in an educational context, particularly from someone whose main drive is e-safety and therefore about risks? Whilst that's partly true, I firmly believe that e-safety is a life skill, and we dont teach life skills by doing one-off sessions, but we embed and nurture those skills over a long period of time in order to instil positive behaviours. Like it or loathe it, social media is an ever-expanding part of modern-day life, and it provides us with great communication and collaboration tools. But it also provides us with opportunities to mitigate risk, build resilience and so much more.

There are so many collaborative and engaging tools out there to suit every taste, and in this newsletter I've highlighted just a few.

The limit is our own imagination.

Using Social Media
In Education

I have visited many schools who firmly embrace (or want to embrace) the social aspects of technology for learning or school engagement, but I've visited far more that don't for a variety of understandable reasons. The mention of social media or social networks may conjure up images of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc., and whilst those services can be used there are many more out there, and most are free.

So for the purpose of this newsletter we're going to look at a few social media tools which includes curation tools, but firstly what are some of the reasons for using social media? Well, there are many, but principally:

- It's not going away, embrace it.

- Significant, worldwide reach; connecting with experts.

- Nurturing a positive attitude and responsibility.

- Communication skills, critical thinking.

- Student engagement.

- Share your successes and student work with parents..

e-safety adviser

Using Social Media
Continued

That last one is also important when you think that many families don't have broadband connection in their home or a PC/laptop, instead relying on mobile technology such as a mobile phone. The beauty with all of the tools mentioned here is that they can be used and viewed across a great many devices with ease.

Are there any risks?

Yes, there is no such thing as 'no risk' but that doesn't mean that we should shy away from it; quite the opposite in fact. Part of the planning would involve consideration and mitigation of any risks. I've previously written some simple tips for The Guardian newspaper here - http://bit.ly/1OmlwoV

Skype is a very well known video communication tool and is extremely useful in the classroom.

- Connect with other classes from the other side of the world;

- Virtually invite guest speakers and experts into the classroom;

- Connect with museums and art galleries.

Here's a great introduction to using Skype in the classroom, along with a few case studies for you to read:

http://bit.ly/1b9Kqfv

Pinterest is like a storyboard, a social curation tool so to speak. Some of its better uses are:

- Collate and curating content for projects, homework or research subjects;

- Organizing ideas;

- Connecting with others with similar interests

Here's a couple of great links from the BBC and Edudemic for more information and ideas:

http://bit.ly/1OMVywV

http://bit.ly/1NWNBse

Using Social Media
Continued

Blogs are great social networks and blogging has so many positive educational outcomes that it is seen by many as a 'must-do' in school, whether that's a class blog, school blog, or individual student blogs.

Personally I view blogging as the best way of embedding basic e-safety skills into the whole school curriculum.

Some positive outcomes are:

- Motivating hard to engage learners;

- Collaboration;

- ICT skills including digital literacy;

- Whole school engagement, including parents/community.

If you don't know where to start, the best free classroom resources, in my opinion, are those from DigitalMe Safe.

These resources contain lesson plans and much more to get you and your students safely on the blogging journey and are well worth a look:

http://bit.ly/1HeLc6A

Your current website provider may already have a way for you to host your blogs, but if not here are a couple of great alternatives:

Creative blogs   http://bit.ly/1OMZyNW

Makewaves   http://bit.ly/1GT4Q9w

Using Social Media
Continued

Flipboard is one that doesn't often get a mention and may take a little bit of thought, but it could be really useful tool similar to Pinterest.

I'm a big fan of Flipboard and use it both professionally and personally to keep up with the latest news, interests, research etc.
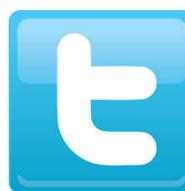
For example, I'm sure you've got a school newsletter, how about creating a school digital magazine instead of a school newsletter.? You could have your school council or digital leaders do the curation for you. You could also have class magazines for projects, research etc..

Have a look here for some ideas:

http://bit.ly/1b4OUFI

Twitter is an unusual one, and I'm still sitting on the fence with using this social network in the classroom.

I use it both personally and professionally and I love it; i've spoken to many schools that also love using Twitter both as a school engagement tool, and also some that are using it in both primary and secondary classrooms with the students.

Here are some thoughts and ideas from the Digital Classrooms blog:

Twitter for school, how to get started

http://bit.ly/1GOAdfi

From Padlet to Twitter

http://bit.ly/1GT8dND

In Summary

- Using social media as a classroom tool can be very rewarding in terms of student engagement and educational outcomes.

- There are so many tools to choose from, but have a look at some of the more popular ones to see if they fit your needs.

- Be mindful of age restrictions, check the Terms and Conditions of the service.

- If you're not already doing so, seriously consider getting the students blogging.

18 Rated Games
Reporting to Police?

Over the Easter holidays I received a phone call from the BBC completely out of the blue, and on a Sunday! The purpose of the call was to ask if I had seen the widespread media reporting regarding a letter that had been sent home from a group of schools to parents.

In essence a letter had been sent home to parents (in February) from a group of schools which stated that if the school becomes aware of children playing 18 rated games, then the parents will be reported to social services and the police for neglect. It also stated quote access to these games OR to some social media sites ..... increases early sexualised behaviours (sometimes harmful) in children AND leaves them vulnerable to grooming for sexual exploitation or extreme violence unquote.

That's quite a bold statement; the correlation between these activities and subsequent behaviours is loose. On their own, playing a game or using a particular social network is not by itself a good indicator of risk or neglect, and certainly not with ALL children, there are many other factors involved.

This is always going to be an incredibly difficult (and highly emotive) subject and I have every sympathy for this group of schools; this frustration rings true in many schools that I visit.

To balance this out, I thought the letter was generally positive, I could see exactly what they were trying to achieve and they were apparently acting on the advice of the local safeguarding board. There is no doubt the schools have the health and wellbeing of the children at heart, but the underlying threatening tone of the letter and the sweeping statements were a concern, particularly in respect to reporting parents to social services and the police and the lack of good evidence.

There is little doubt that these schools have got some reputational repair work to do, but the point I'm trying to make here is be careful with this type of communication.

In my subsequent interviews on BBC Breakfast and Radio 5 Live I tried to keep the schools in a positive aspect and make clear that all schools are actively engaging with parents in this area; this is the most important aspect, not threatening them. Of course if you do have concerns about a child and you believe their online activity is a factor, if you have tried to engage with that family and it hasn't worked then clearly further action may need to be taken - that goes without saying.

Link to letter: http://bit.ly/1GTIPJ1

Useful Resources

If you know what the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) do, you'll know that the vast majority of us would not be able to stomach that type of work.

Their latest report, out on 14th Apr makes for great reading about how they have adopted new tactics in order to remove 137% more child abuse material from the internet over the previous year.

http://bit.ly/1Ddzoin

A teacher's must-have guide to Facebook.

An interesting guide if you're looking to connect with students inside or outside the classroom. Controversial perhaps, but there is a slow movement in that direction.

Also, using Facebook for connecting with parents is one of the best, free and easiest tools to use.

http://bit.ly/1EyZPkG

Bits n Bytes

Guidance: PREVENT

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contains a duty on authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

http://bit.ly/1N2lGmJ

Guidance: Preventing and Tackling Bullying

Updated (November 2014) guidance from Gov.UK to prevent and tackle bullying.

http://bit.ly/1hbHnjs

Cloud Services

Would you know if your school's cloud service was breaking the law? A great blog with some really useful advice from Karl Rivers.

http://bit.ly/1JGQ6ZN

A short video from Dom Tester as he takes you through setting up a Facebook page for your school.

Brilliant for parental engagement!

http://bit.ly/1CF2Jj3

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