

CHILDNET INTERNATIONAL
RESPONSE TO THE
INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE
PRIMARY CURRICULUM –
CALL FOR EVIDENCE

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Childnet
International

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Introduction

Childnet is a registered charity working with children, young people, teachers, parents and carers, government and policy makers to help make the Internet a great and safe place for children. Set up in 1995, Childnet is an independent organisation that seeks to promote the positive use of technology and highlight the positive things that children are doing with new technology, as well as responding to the potential negative side¹.

Childnet has been active in the area of policy around safe and responsible use of the Internet since its inception, as well as promoting awareness and education. Childnet works closely with the DCSF, BECTA and the TDA on strategic educational projects including the award winning 'Know IT All' resource of which 1 million copies have been distributed to schools across the UK. Childnet was also commissioned by the DCSF to undertake the production of clear guidance for schools on responding to Cyberbullying. This eight month project involved consulting with all stakeholders across Government, Education and Civil society and launching the guidance in September 07.²

Childnet is pleased to respond to the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum Call for Evidence, and welcomes the active consideration of the position of ICT and e-safety within the primary curriculum as part of this review.

Childnet's education teams have for the past ten years worked on a regular basis in both primary and secondary schools across the UK, conducting targeted comprehensive sessions on e-safety and positive use of ICT technologies as well as considering the risks that school age users may encounter. Having run e-safety sessions in hundreds of primary schools and supported many thousands of primary school children we believe that the primary curriculum needs to make stronger reference to the urgent need to better equip and empower children as young as 7 and 8 in safe and responsible use of the Internet. Indeed Children, including those aged 12 and under, now have unprecedented levels of access to, and even ownership of, modern technologies. The EuroBarometer study in 2007³ found, for example, that 75% of 9-10 year-olds had a mobile phone. It is Childnet's experience that as young children have access to technology, they assume 'ownership' of it. While these young people may be using the technologies outside of the school environment for socialising and other forms of entertainment, increasingly this behaviour impacts on their school life, such as cyberbullying.

Childnet contributed to the earlier QCA Curriculum Review Consultation in May 2007⁴ and welcomed the revised curriculum's emphasis on the need to promote the use of technology for responsible social engagement across the curriculum. However, we believed at the time that the review should include stronger reference to the need to equip students with the necessary skills to understand and prevent the risks associated with the Internet and digital communication. This includes the importance of critical evaluation and information skills, the significance of keeping personal information secure, understanding the impact and consequences of antisocial online behaviour (including cyberbullying), and the issues relating to ownership, copyright, plagiarism, and privacy of information. What we believe about the KS3 curriculum we believe even more strongly for the primary curriculum.

¹ See www.childnet.com for details of Childnet's work and award-winning projects

² The DCSF Childnet also commissioned Childnet to produce a film for schools on the tackling Cyberbullying. Entitled 'Let's Fight It together' this film is being made available to free of charge for all schools and 40,000 copies have now been produced.

³ See http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/eurobarometer/index_en.htm, p 6.

⁴ See http://www.childnet.com/downloads/curriculum_review.pdf

While the Internet offers a great number of opportunities for children and young people (outlined fully at Annex A), Childnet believes that there are three main risks facing children and young people in the online world and these relate to children of primary school age just as much as older users. Childnet has defined these risks as the three C's; Content, Contact and Commercialism, including threats of cyberbullying and grooming. (See Annex B for more details on risks).

Childnet's work has sought not only to empower primary age users to use the Internet safely and responsibly, but has also sought to support teachers so that they are fully equipped and confident to deal with this important subject matter.

We were pleased to read the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Family's letter (dated 9th January) setting out his interest in the review and the DCFS's ambitions and values in relation to this topic. Childnet agrees that pupils should be taught across a broad range of subjects that encourage creativity and inspire commitments to learning that will last a lifetime. This is particularly important with the Internet as a continuously evolving medium and one that looks set to grow and to continue to impact on and shape the learning environment.

Childnet welcomed the reference to personal development and the stated concern with the development of the whole child. Increasingly today's child does not distinguish between their online and their offline activities and from a child's perspective there is no clear distinction between their online and offline conduct. To this end it is important that ICT is included on the primary curriculum when other key life skills are being taught. The Byron Report publication, "Safer Children in a Digital World" (March 2008) highlighted the fact that the primary stage is a formative stage in child development and that it is the age when children are developing friendships and learning behaviour (p.35), in particular 'learning what is right and wrong, learning about social rules and norms [and] sorting out reality from fantasy.' (p.36). This is the same time when children are forming their online behaviours and when they are first starting to access technology. We believe that it is imperative that children at this stage learn safe and responsible use of technology, i.e. while they are still forming their online behaviours. In our submission to the Byron review Childnet stated:

*"Childnet believes that it is crucial that the subject of e-safety is integrated into the formal curriculum both within primary and secondary schools and also within the initial teacher training and school staff continual professional development programmes. Childnet believe that this would help to facilitate an integrated, universal approach to educating and empowering children to use the Internet and mobile phones safely."*⁵

Childnet firmly believes that the key universal point of access in engaging with children in managing the potential and actual risks of engaging with the Internet is through schools and it is for these reasons outlined in the introduction above and the answers to the questions below that Childnet is confident in calling for the inclusion of ICT and e-safety within the primary curriculum.

1c) What should be the position of science and ICT within the primary curriculum?

Childnet believes that it is crucial that the subject of e-safety is integrated into the formal curriculum within primary and within the initial teacher training and school staff continual professional development programmes.

Establishing ICT on the primary curriculum would help to ensure that there is a better universal support and education for children on using new technologies safely and responsibly. There is also a clear need for this to go hand in hand with education of parents and hands-on practical support for teachers as part of their continual professional

⁵ See <http://www.childnet.com/news/articles/031207.html> for details about Childnet's submission to this review.

development in understanding the new issues. Indeed Childnet has worked with the TDA in designing a specialist 'Know IT ALL for Teachers and Trainee Teachers' resource which outlines the e-safety issues for them. The work involved research with 600 teacher trainees in 4 initial teacher training organisations and the report concluded that "*e-safety should be embedded within the teaching standards requirements to meet the statutory regulation. There are a number of models of implementing the training including face-to-face which show a higher uptake and are more highly valued by trainees. An online portal should be developed with resources, information and advice, specifically to meet the needs of trainee teachers and their tutors.*" The result of this is the Know IT ALL portal site and DVD which has been sent to every single Initial Teacher Training institution across England. A separate resource for existing secondary school teachers has also been produced and is available for schools to order free of charge from the DCSF. Childnet is currently working on a new resource for Primary school teachers and this resource could play a major part in strengthening any recommendations coming from the primary curriculum review⁶.

It is also important to note that ICT and, specifically, web-based resources, are increasingly being used across the curriculum. Childnet therefore believes that it makes sense that e-safety guidance should be given to pupils wherever and whenever such use occurs, in a manner appropriate to the age, understanding and skill level of the pupils. This could be in the form of a reminder of the school's Acceptable Use Policy before going online in a geography lesson to look at a live webcam of volcanic activity, or a reminder, in an English lesson, of the need to critically evaluate materials found on the web and observe copyright restrictions.

Childnet believes that schools should be encouraged to look for opportunities for teaching e-safety across the curriculum where possible to cover issues that might not be encountered during in-school use of ICT. Although e-safety is not explicitly referred to within the primary curriculum at present, there are several appropriate areas within the programmes of study that offer opportunities to discuss e-safety issues.

Without doubt, managing, guiding and regulating children's Internet use is a delicate and challenging task and one that Childnet believes will most effectively be pursued with children's cooperation and as part of their learning experience.

With almost ten years experience of working in schools, Childnet firmly believes that primary schools in the UK would welcome the inclusion of ICT and e-safety on the primary curriculum and would welcome increased support for teaching staff alongside this. Over the past two years Childnet has experienced an increase in requests for primary school training days of 11%.⁷ Anecdotal evidence collected on school visits has revealed that in many instances schools are currently finding it hard to incorporate ICT into their everyday teaching and Childnet has been working to provide authoritative and accessible resources to schools to make it easier for teachers to deliver in the school environment. This has been done by creating an award winning⁸ range of resources covering all aspects of e-safety (including mobile phone use, data protection, social networking service information, and cyberbullying advice) in a range of media, accompanied by teacher's notes and support packs designed to help children, young people and parents manage their expectations of the Internet as well as highlighting the benefits but also the dangers of using the Internet.⁹

6 Childnet's 'Know IT ALL for teachers and Trainees' could be utilized in this way : See <http://www.childnet.com/kia/>

7 In 2006/07 40% of the schools visited by Childnet's education team were primary schools. In 2007/08 51% of the schools visited by Childnet's education team were primary schools

8 KIAiP won the Nominet Best Practice Award for diversity 2007. KIAiP makes use of video and interactive elements rather than text to reach those challenged by lack of literacy in English or disability and made a summary section in 8 languages, including British Sign Language, Urdu, Bengali, Arabic, Polish and Mandarin.

9 This includes the award winning resources Know IT All for Parents which is available in 8 languages, Young People, Music and the Internet (translated in 26 languages) and the Kidsmart schools resources and outreach programme. Childnet has also produced practical websites on key issues such as chat (See:www.chatdanger.com) and working with young people (See: www.childnet.com/sorted) which gives advice to young people about information security issues. All of Childnet's resource have been produced in careful consultation with children, young people and parents as well as subject matter experts to ensure that the resources are useful and effective and providing the right messages.

4a) What are the personal, social and emotional capabilities that children need to develop through their schooling?

Schooling helps children to develop many of the skills required for living in today's world. The inclusion of ICT is important as part of the school process helps children and young people to develop key skills required for thriving in today's economy. Furthermore, current academic and public policy research has shown that the use of technology the use of ICT in the classroom assists teachers and tutors, improves attainment and motivates students in new ways. This has most clearly been demonstrated by raised standards and improved learners' attainment in schools and further education colleges where technology has been effectively embedded.¹⁰

Learning how to deal with risk is an important part of growing up. It is important for children and young people to learn to understand, assess and manage risks, both offline and online, as part of the schooling process. Dealing with online risks is an important part of this process, but Childnet firmly believes that children and young people need to be supported in this process. Primary aged children learn through the modelling of good behaviour, but very often their parents are unable to model 'good behaviour' online. Childnet therefore believes that there is a real need for children to learn in the school environment relating to digital citizenship.

Childnet's '[Digizen](#)'¹¹ website demonstrates how Childnet has sought to tackle this area by promoting the concept of digital citizenship and equipping and empowering children and young people so that they are able to deal with online hazards and also to think about their social development in building safe spaces and communities, understanding how to manage their personal information, and how to use their online presence to grow and shape their world in a safe, creative way, and inspiring others to do the same.

Conclusion

In this short submission Childnet has briefly outlined the considerable experience it has had in pioneering e-safety training to pupils, teachers and parents of primary aged children. The organisation firmly believes that the basic skills taught in schools of reading, writing and maths now also need to be complemented by much stronger and comprehensive media literacy training so that young people develop the skills to understand how to find, evaluate, manage and use the information that they may encounter online and are truly afforded the opportunity to create, connect and to discover and get the most out of the Internet. It is only by better equipping primary school teachers and embedding e-safety training in the curriculum that we can ensure that universal support for young children who stand so much to gain from using the new technology safely and responsibly.

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If the primary review team would like to attend a Childnet e-safety school activity day (as mentioned in this response) in person we would be delighted to facilitate this.

www.childnet.com

¹⁰ Learning in the 21st century: The case for harnessing technology; (17 September 2007)

<http://publications.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?resID=33996>

¹¹ <http://www.digizen.org/>

Annex A: The positive side of the Internet

The Internet provides a wide number of benefits to children, young people, society and the economy alike. Over the last few years, the Internet has become an indispensable part of family life. 61% of homes in the UK now have Broadband access and 84% of those households have a broadband connection¹². Current academic and public policy research shows that the use of technology assists teachers and tutors, improves attainment and motivates students in new ways. Use of technology also helps children and young people to develop key skills required for thriving in today's economy. Additionally, the ongoing convergence of technology means that the Internet is increasingly accessible from ever sophisticated mobile phones.

The Internet presents a great number of opportunities for children and young people and Childnet has always grouped these advantages for children in terms of discovery, creation and connection.

Discovery: The Internet can be likened to the greatest library in the world, placing a whole host of information at the fingertips of children and young people. Search engines facilitate effective searches through vast reams of data which, with due care and caution, can be utilised by children and young people in doing their homework, and investigating subjects of personal interest.

Creation: The Internet also empowers young people to create content in new and exciting ways. The creation and development of applications such as Facebook, YouTube, Bebo and MySpace have added to the ways that children and young people are able to express themselves and publish material online giving them a voice and enabling them to post creative content without the need to learn html and specific coding languages.

Connection: The Internet can act to bring children and young people together, connecting them through diverse applications and in many instances the Internet offers the opportunity to break down barriers such as geography, thereby enabling peers to connect inter-globally as well as breaking down barriers created by disability that may be a block to conventional dialogue and interaction.

¹² National Statistics Omnibus Survey; Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey; Survey of Internet Service Provider, (28 August 2007)
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=8>

Annex B: Potential risks

Content:

There is a risk that when using the Internet or other online services and technologies, young people may be exposed to inappropriate content. This may be material that is pornographic, hateful or violent, encourages activities that are dangerous or illegal, or is just age-inappropriate or biased. One of the key benefits of the web is that it is open to all, but unfortunately, this also means that those with extreme political, racist or sexist views also have a voice. However it is important to clarify that both harmful and illegal material can put children at risk and children may be placed at risk by accessing content that may not be illegal or considered harmful in its rightful context.

Children and young people are put at risk by accessing content that may not be accurate. Use of unverified websites may put children and young people at risk from accepting content to be true when in fact it is not. Anyone can write what they want and post it on the Internet, and as a result not all the information available online is good information. Inaccurate information can be misleading or even dangerous in some situations, for example when it covers health advice. Plagiarism and copyright are also key issues, particularly in relation to copying schoolwork and downloading music or games, as popularised by many filesharing services. Childnet believes that it is important that children and young people should understand that these activities can have serious moral, legal and financial consequences. The production of the Young People Music and the Internet¹³ leaflet with the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), a guide for parents about P2P, filesharing and downloading aimed to provide parents and young people alike about the risks faced as a result of illegal use of the aforementioned technologies.

Contact:

The Internet is a fantastic tool for keeping in contact. However there is an element of risk involved in this and children and young people can be at risk from unwanted contact on the Internet from those who may seek to bully them and also sadly from sexual offenders. Childnet's youth panel highlighted a lack of awareness surrounding children and young people verifying new contacts and checking their reliability, perhaps most evident in the willingness to add 'friends of friends' to their personal contact lists in various online fora. The youth panel also underscored a lack of awareness regarding privacy online. This is an issue both in terms of sharing contact details and also in sharing financially sensitive details.

Commercialism:

The Internet is also a commercial environment. As young people and children have migrated online from other forms of entertainment so the marketing industry has developed sophisticated and innovative techniques to chase them. Children and young people may be placed at risk in the commercial environment online where data protection rules and marketing codes of practice are flouted, hidden persuasion techniques are employed in the form of advertisements and commercial messages that cannot be easily identified by children and where products and services that have a legal age limit are advertised indiscriminately such as gambling and dating. Childnet have done some work recently researching this with the National Consumer Council (NCC) and Dr Agnes Nairn, and a report titled 'Fair Game? Assessing commercial activity on children's favourite websites and online environments'.¹⁴

Furthermore, children and young people often get caught out by 'free offers' online. In particular, many children have been caught out by signing up to premium rate subscriptions believing that they were making a one-off purchase of a product. Services such as those offering ring tones and logos and competitions paid for by premium rate do not make it clear for children and young that the agreements promoted required a reverse-billed subscription.¹⁵ Childnet are aware of instances where children on a post-pay contract have run up a monthly

¹³ <http://www.childnet.com/music/>

¹⁴ www.childnet.com/publications/policy.aspx

¹⁵ Supported by evidence from the Safer Internet for Children Qualitative Study across 29 European Countries (May 2007), p.51

bill in excess of £1,000. Childnet have worked with PhonePay Plus (previously ICSTIS) to try and raise awareness about the safe and responsible use of Internet services.¹⁶

In all three of these areas it is Childnet's aim to equip and to empower young people so that they are able to manage online risks when they are presented to them and to make sensible life choices and decisions, as well as informing policy makers, government and industry on these areas.

Childnet believes that the risks outlined above are extended by the ongoing convergence of technology. As the Internet is increasingly accessible from ever sophisticated mobile phones, the risks are extended by the fact that mobile phones are **personal**, meaning that children and young people can, and often do use them away from supervision. This acts to give them a sense of ownership and responsibility. Not only does this reduce their willingness to explain their phone use to their parent or carer, but also increases the likelihood that they will deal with any challenges that they encounter using the medium privately. The **portable** and **private** nature of mobile phones combined with the fact that children and young people are not discriminate about when they turn their phone off, renders it likely that are always reachable via their phone.

¹⁶ See <http://www.phonebrain.org.uk/xtra/teachers/>