



Frog Specialist Schools e-Safety Case Study



The Mirfield Free Grammar & Sixth Form

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Background

The Mirfield Free Grammar and Sixth Form is a larger than average 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school. Founded in 1667 we have a long established tradition of success and promote values such as respect, honesty, integrity, morality and courtesy. We are also a DCSF designated Technology College and a Foundation School. We embrace the new technologies to ensure that our students have the skills to equip them for life in the 21st century. We are an outstanding school and achieved our highest GCSE results of 81% 5 A*-Cs this year (2009) and have recently been appointed as a High Performing Specialist School as a Leadership Partner School.

Challenge

E-safety is a major issue facing parents, schools and especially students. The rise of international communication over the past couple of years with Web 2.0 social networking now opens up a major new way of living, which the 'internet generation' are now very much involved with. Facebook, Spotify, MSN, Bebo, gaming consoles and smart phones provide instant and realtime networking which other generations do use, but not to the extent of current teenagers.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this use of technology; each generation has communicated more than the one before and this is a natural progression. Many teenagers are very conscious of not ignoring others in the real world and are not slaves to the technology. Others, however, do regularly need unplugging to make sure they are able to relate to others. In either case, there are always going to be people around the world who want to use the Social Networking technologies to exploit and abuse children. e-safety is a major aspect of safeguarding and child protection, but we must get away from the idea of just blocking. Teenagers will find a way to access web technologies either by bypassing blocking software or using other people's computers, or through their mobile phones which are not blocked. Students need teaching how to use technologies properly so they can benefit themselves and their education, and what to do if they witness or end up being involved with something they feel uncomfortable with.



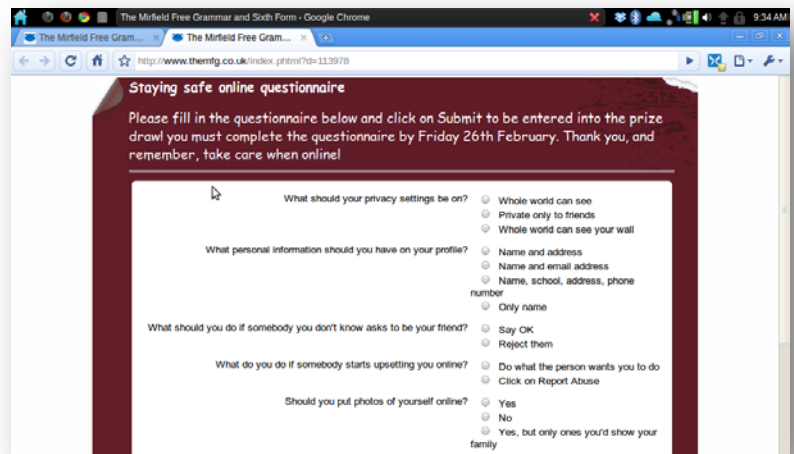
Competition – after Safe Online Day in February, we ran a competition to win a netbook. The task was to produce a desktop background on e-safety which can be used on all the PCs in school. This means every single student will receive e-safety messages each time they log on. The entry standard was very high and some very clear messages and images were created by students. Many of them included Frog images as they understand that the way Frog operates Social Networking is safe and structured. Backgrounds will rotate on a daily basis so students see something different to attract

their attention.

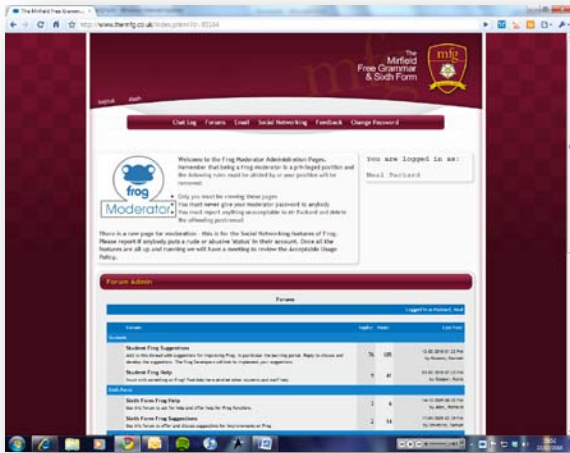
FrogBook - the Frog form functions are used to gather evidence of understanding after

e-safety assemblies or lessons.

Although the Social Networking features of Frog are designed to integrate with learning tools within Frog, in themselves they are a great lesson in being part of an on-line community, how to communicate appropriately on-line and policing each other on-line. FrogBook also has the major advantage of the school controlling who students are friends with, eg main school students can only befriend main school students, sixth formers can only befriend sixth formers. This ensures students are not communicating with people they do not know, which is a big teaching point for systems like Facebook (there is no competition for having the most friends, reject is a perfectly viable option). Over five hundred students access FrogBook on a weekly basis.



Frog moderators – students in Years 10 and 11 volunteered to moderate the forums and email. They developed their own Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP) and so earned student buy-in to the rules of the community, these were not rules devised and imposed by teachers!



Moderators have to be recommended by the Achievement Co-ordinator of their year group and have their own portal to access logs and referral forms.

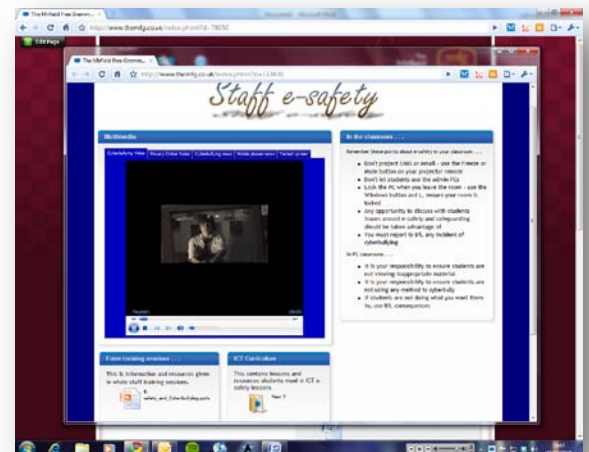
ICT lessons – e-safety lessons are regularly delivered by the ICT team through Key Stages 3 and 4. These are shared to students, as well as staff and parents, so all are aware of key issues. Frog is used again to evaluate work alongside other ICT software.

Staff

e-safety portal – this contains much of the information from the student portal as well as reminders of

e-safety in all of the classroom (not just in ICT lessons), training materials previously delivered, web links and articles from the media relevant to e-safety.

Internet controls – the school has the usual filtering from the NGFL through to school's own systems. Frog provides its own 'teacher specific' internet controls which allows teachers to control access to certain sites in the room, ensuring learning continues undisturbed.

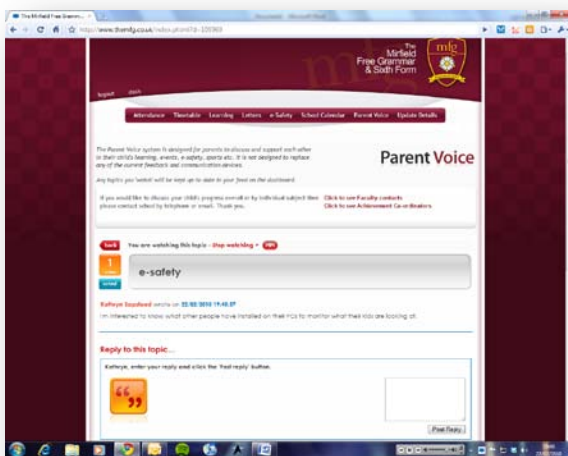


FrogBook – Staff have access to the same collaborative features as the students. Not only does this benefit collaboration between staff but also allows those who have no experience of social networking a frame of reference to discuss features with students.

Consequences – even though educating students is important, there will be occasions where students do abuse systems provided for them. In this small number of cases, we are able to create separate Frog profiles which limit access to various areas of Frog so students are still able to access learning materials but will be locked out of other more collaborative functions. This is not permanent but is a way of making it clear to students of what is acceptable and what is not. Limited access can be added as appropriate and special monitoring can take place of the small numbers of students who require it.

Parents

e-safety portal – an “e-safety at Home” page on the Frog Parent Engagement Portal (PEP) gives parents a central place to find resources to help support their children. Often parents feel inadequately informed or experienced with new technology to know the dangers on what to look for. The “e-safety at Home” portal has information and resources which have been made in school (including multi-media) and ways of getting further advice from external agencies, as well as find how to report abuse or inappropriate behaviour online.



Parent Voice – this is built into the Frog PEP and provides a forum style area where parents can discuss issues including e-safety. This allows a sharing of good practice and advice which otherwise would be impossible to achieve.

FrogBook – parents can also join in social networking activities, linked to the Parent Voice which is a way of experiencing new technologies which they otherwise might not use.

The Future

The future of ICT is going to see the inclusion of networking for learning increase. Mobile phone technology will continue to develop and be more affordable so as most children now text regularly, they will have access to smart phone (e.g. iPhone, Android phones) and hence social networking at all times.

It is vital that schools embrace this technology for learning and also to educate students in using it in a mature and positive way, being aware of possible dangers and what to do about them if they occur. Frog has been forward-thinking in designing a Learning Platform flexible enough to allow it to promote e-safety in this way.

Because of the Frog Learning Platform, I am convinced students at The Mirfield Free Grammar & Sixth Form are more aware of dangers online and network in an informed and mature way, supported by their teachers and parents.