How safe are your kids when they are online?

The Queensland Family and Child Commission is urging parents to take an interest in their children's online activities on **Internet Safety Day** on **Tuesday 7 March 2017** and we also want to encourage each of you to remain vigilant about what your child is accessing via the internet, and in particular online games. Protecting your children from harm is just as important online as it is in the real world. As a parent or carer, you can play an important role in helping children have safe and positive experiences online. The internet offers an exciting world of experiences for children and the whole family. It can be entertaining, educational and rewarding. However, using the internet also involves risks and challenges.

Children might be exposed to content that is sexually explicit, violent, prohibited or even illegal.

Children may - unknowingly or deliberately - share personal information without realising they may be subject to inappropriate contact, or that they are leaving behind content that might not reflect well on them in the future. By taking an active role in talking with your children about the risks and answering their questions or concerns about something that they find on the Internet you can help them stay safer online.

Our young people are the most connected generation ever. They live in an online world where digital interactions provide a sense of meaning, belonging and community. However, this environment can also introduce considerable risk into their lives. Many young people and their families do not have the strategies to deal with these risks and the impacts it can have on their mental and emotional health and wellbeing now and in the future.

The QFCC has been focusing on what part we can all play in keeping children and young people safe when they are online. Safer Internet Day provides an opportunity for all of us to think about what we are posting on social media and how we are protecting ourselves in the digital world.

From cyberbullying to social networking, each year Safer Internet Day aims to raise awareness of emerging online issues and chooses a topic reflecting current concerns.

For Safer Internet Day 2017, the focus is *'Be the change: Unite for a better internet'*. Safer Internet Day aims to raise awareness of the online issues which affect young people - including cyberbullying, unwanted contact and sharing too much information.

As an eSmart school, we will continue to promote positive use of digital technologies and behaviours among our students and staff alike. We also have available a series of options for our students to report inappropriate online behaviours, details of which can be found on the school website under both student and parent resources.

10 Tips to help protect yourself and your children online

1. Check your privacy settings on all your social media accounts - who can see what you are sharing?

2. Are you using hashtags, e.g. Miss12 or firstdayofschool which might allow online predators to find content about your children?

3. Know who is talking to your children online. Sit down with them and go through their online "friends" or followers – if they don't know them in real life, delete them.

4. Talk to kids about the risks of sending intimate pictures of themselves to peers. Remind them that once they send a photo they have no control where it goes and who sees it.

5. Keep devices in supervised open area of the home and out of bedrooms. Consider drawing up a family internet safety contract (there's one available at thinkuknow.org.au).

6. Don't share or accept images form someone you don't know. Don't give out personal information.

7. Think about the photos you are taking of your children and uploading. A generation ago, it may have been okay to take a photo of a child in a bath, but these days, it could end up in the wrong place.

8. Have time away from devices every day.

9. Be aware of any sudden changes in your child's behaviour and take an interest in their online activities.

10. Let your children know they can confide in you if anything makes them feel uncomfortable or concerned and keep the lines of communication open.

Need more information?

The eSafety Commission has some excellent resources available for parents, children and young people that promote safe and more responsible use of online technology. [Find out more....](#)

Save the Date

Join the QFCC on 11 March 2017 10.00am - 3.00pm for the Out of the Dark Expo at the State Library of Queensland, South Brisbane. The Expo will showcase products and services to support online safety. At this free event, you will have the opportunity to learn how to use the most popular social media platforms and everyone can get involved and help develop new products to protect children and young people.