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Online Safety

Protecting our kids

CEOP

Who? Three School Governors attended a presentation given by a member of the governments Child Exploitation and Online Protection (**CEOP**) team. This organization is run by the police but includes experts from numerous areas including government agencies, the NSPCC, Microsoft and other child protection specialists.

What Do They Do?

The whole purpose of CEOP is to eradicate the abuse and exploitation of children. The first step is to gather information about offenders. They do this by tracking online activity, setting traps and they then pass this onto the appropriate police agency. The information is also fed into their Behavioral Analysis and Child Trafficking units who build up a larger picture of how these people work. They can then formulate plans on how best to tackle them.

Why Should We Worry?

Online information can be used by criminals to commit a number of offences. These range from identity theft to child abduction and trafficking. The latter is becoming more and more extensive with children being trafficked for anything from labour exploitation and domestic servitude to benefit fraud and, of course, sexual abuse. **This is happening in the UK.**

The Scary Bit!

Are you a user of social networking sites, such as Face Book? It is amazing how many sites have no protection set up on them whatsoever. Without this “barrier” one can find names, addresses, dates of birth, likes and dislikes of all those involved, including children, many of whom have their own sites now. Combine this with the photos and all the other information that is posted on peoples “walls” and you are putting yourself at risk. Needless to say, an identity thief or paedophile could have a field day with the amount of information available after a short search.

What Can We Do?

The overriding message from the CEOP presentation is **EDUCATION**. Make sure that we, as parents, don't put too much info' onto the web, especially about our kids, and explain to our children why they **HAVE** to be so very careful. The problem is increasing and is not going to go away; assume everything that you post on the internet is going to be read by someone who wants to cause you harm and take the time to set up proper security. On the CEOP site they have a test (for kids and adults) to see how internet savvy you are – give it a go; it's enlightening! It's under the Safety Centre banner at:

www.CEOP.gov.uk

Happy Christmas and safe surfing!

How do snowmen get to work? By icicle!