



# Merry Hill Matters

Issue 304 - 3rd February 2012

## Safer Internet Day

Next Tuesday (7th) is Safer Internet Day. It encourages parents to explore the internet with their children and to talk about internet safety.

Actions you can take to protect your child online:

- Install a web safe browser on your computer.
- Ensure your child shows you the sites they use.
- Talk to your child about telling you if they are worried about something they see online.

And if you have older children:

If they have a mobile phone:

- Talk to their provider about filtering software.
- Tell them to save any abusive texts as evidence and not to respond to them.

If they have a Facebook account:

- Ensure that they set their profile settings to 'Private' so only people they accept as friends can view their profile.
- Talk about only uploading photos they'd be happy to show to you - they never know where the photos could end up.
- Explain about not giving away too much information, such as 'clues' that could give their whereabouts away.
- Add the ClickCEOP app to their Facebook profile: [www.facebook.com/clickceop](http://www.facebook.com/clickceop).

Useful further information can be found at [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/5\\_7/](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/5_7/). This website includes You Tube videos you can watch with your child.

See also:

[www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)

[www.kidsmart.org.uk/](http://www.kidsmart.org.uk/)

An excellent video for parents of older children can be found at: <http://youtu.be/TxLkqU7JJkc>

## Parent Voice

We had a very good Parent Voice Meeting last week, talking about our work with the children about manners/being polite and about homework. I have included both the positive and the negative written comments that parents left about the session. Overleaf you will find the 'Top Tips for Homework' that we discussed.

- Friendly atmosphere - lots and lots of information.
- Positive - great tip on the set time and top tips on homework and manners.
- It was really good to hear about how Merry Hill is focusing on good manners! Will be consciously aware of reinforcing at home in the same manner.
- I noticed the big change in my children's way of speaking; i.e. please and no thank you.
- I really enjoyed learning how to address certain life skills that come up.
- Thank you for this meeting. It was very useful to me.
- It was really good - I like the bigger picture outlook - 'Skills for Life'.
- The tips for homework are very useful. Encouragement, practical advice.
- Good - thorough advice and explanation - useful content.
- Plus - brilliant as it covered some really good topics especially homework.
- Good to know assembly topics as can reinforce at home.
- Sometimes we need to remind ourselves about setting time for homework.
- Negative - maybe make the meetings more frequent.
- No negatives, sorry - can't think of any.
- More time would have been better - (question and answer session).
- Area for development, perhaps a few more minutes for questions and answers.
- What could have been better - group (more) interaction - set the group in a circle!
- Maybe a bit more advertising and reminders to boost attendance? - many other parents could gain from attending.

### **Top Tip 1**

#### **Establish a routine**

It's a good idea to set a routine for homework (and stick to it) - like after tea. Try to make it the same time every day. Once the time is set, stick to it. Children thrive on structure. It may take several weeks for the routine to become a habit. Persist. By having a regular homework time you are demonstrating you value education.

### **Top Tip 2**

#### **Let your child make choices**

Your child could choose to do homework before or after tea. They could choose to do it immediately they get home or a little later. One choice they don't have is whether to do their homework or not!

### **Top Tip 3**

#### **Keep it predictable and simple**

Include a five minute warning that homework time is approaching so that they can bring their current activity to an end, clear the table, empty the bookbag, and start their homework.

### **Top Tip 4**

#### **Remove distractions**

Help your child concentrate by creating the best learning environment, e.g. turn off the TV. Make sure TV time is a set time and that it does not get in the way of homework time.

Provide an area that is light and fairly quiet. It doesn't have to be fancy - the kitchen table, a space in their bedroom or a corner of the living room will be fine, as long as homework is given priority and they are not interrupted.

### **Top Tip 5**

#### **Replace monetary and external rewards with verbal encouragement**

Don't pay your child to do their homework! This has only short-term gains and does little to encourage children to have a life-long love of learning.

### **Top Tip 6**

#### **Help without doing it for them**

You can help and support, but do not do their homework for them!

### **Play Dates**

Please can you ensure that you let us know if your child is going home with another parent? Please either write it in your child's Home-School Link Book or leave a message with the adult on duty in the morning with the message book. Please ensure that an adult leaves the message, not your child.

### **Holidays in Term Time**

We ask that taking children out of school for holidays be kept to a minimum as it is unsettling for them and makes it hard for them to catch up. If you have to book a holiday during term time please remember to complete a holiday form for your child before you go, as any absence which is not authorised is likely to raise concern from the Attendance Improvement Officer who monitors registers.

### **Year 2 Children and Holidays**

The Year 2 children will be undertaking statutory tests during May. I would be grateful if you could avoid organising holidays during May. If children miss the tests it is not always possible to repeat them at another time, so the accuracy of assessments may be diminished.

### **Telephone Trees**

I had the telephone trees to hand this week 'just in case'. Whilst we will always endeavour to open the school during severe weather, many of you will be aware that much of Bushey, including School Lane, becomes impassable in heavy snow.

If your telephone tree details are not up-to-date, or if you have mislaid it, please let Mrs Kamintzis know.

A reminder:

For all parents to receive a school open/closed message in the shortest possible time, if there is no answer from the parent below you on the list, it is vital to telephone the next person on the list so that the chain is not broken. If you have to leave an answerphone message, still also phone the next parent on the list. Also, if you are on more than one list, it is important to phone the next parent on each list.

We also:

1. Put a message on the school website [www.merryhill.org.uk](http://www.merryhill.org.uk) by 7.00am.
2. Notify HCC and they will post the information onto [www.hertsdirect.org](http://www.hertsdirect.org) by 7.00am and update it at 12.30pm.

Pauline Hannibal  
Headteacher

