# Dorset Safe Schools and Communities Team (SSCT)

July 2011

**With the summer term coming to an end and plenty of free time available how will your children be spending it?**

Outdoors? Taking part in sporting activities? With friends? Facebook?

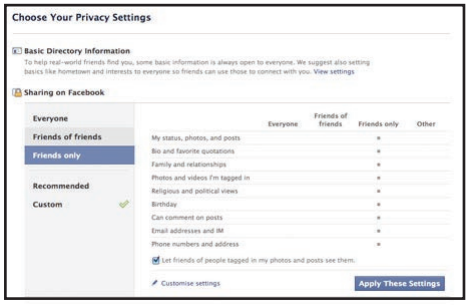
Everything we do in life involves risk and, as parents, we do what we can to minimise these risks for our children. We organise where they are going, who they will be with, what time they will be back and of course we have those chats about strangers. But do we include Facebook in those conversations?

There are few really important things to remember about Facebook:

1. It is a business.
2. It is outside of many UK laws and restrictions.
3. The minimum age is 13, due in part to content.
4. Anything posted to Facebook becomes the property of Facebook; this includes comments, 'likes' and photos.

Bearing those points in mind, children and adults should be selective about what information they part with and consider the implications of posting the wrong thing.

If you join Facebook and don't change your privacy settings




everything other than your photos and wall posts are visible to anyone, regardless of whether or not they are Facebook members.

You should also consider dividing your friends list into separate groups, such as 'family' and 'work' etc. This will allow you to have greater control over what access each group has to your Facebook content. For instance a work colleague might not appreciate seeing what you get up to in your spare time or you might not want to share your family photos with some friends in your list.

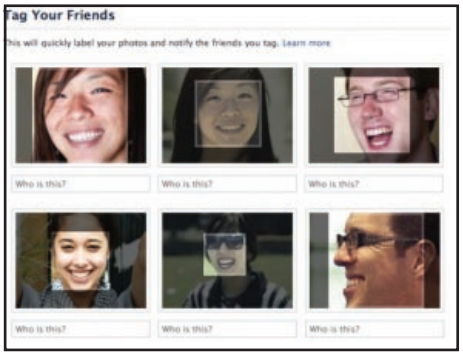
Facebook are always looking to freshen things up by regularly adding new features. When they do this they tend to set these features as pre-selected by the user, this means you have to go into your settings and turn them off. Two examples of this are 'Places' and 'Tag suggestions'.

'Places' – you 'check in' to let your friends know where you are e.g. local cinema or café. Provided you are very careful with your friends list and ensure you actually do know them all, this isn't too risky.

However, combine that with another setting which will automatically tell anyone else already signed in to that 'check in' that you have also 'checked in', and this becomes a lot more risky.

It is likely that Facebook will expand this feature in time making it more accurate and

adding a mapping element so friends (or strangers) can trace you.




'Tag suggestions' - this is an update of the existing photo tagging ability within Facebook. Now instead of having to manually tag every photo you upload it checks the photos and suggests who is in them. It stands to reason that someone could use this technology to trace people in photographs. It is likely Facebook won't allow others to use this facility but like many companies they are susceptible to hacking.

Bullying using technology is a common problem that young people highlight; see the cybermentors link at the bottom of the page for more information. Schools have a duty to deal with bullying so contact them if you have a problem, they can call on the SSCT to assist them. As a team we promote the use of restorative practices to deal with bullying; this practice gives the individual the opportunity to meet with the bully in a safe environment and explain how their behaviour is affecting them and explores ways in which the matter can be resolved and all parties can move forward.

**Legislation**

Please help your children to realise that what they say and do in 'cyberspace' can have consequences in the 'real world'.

For example someone who is 'cyberbullying' another person can be prosecuted under the Malicious Communications Act 1988.

If you harass another person, whether in 'cyberspace' or not, you could be prosecuted under the Harassment Act 1997.

The Sexual offences Act 2003 states it is against the law to be in possession of and/or distribute an indecent image of a child (under 18). Therefore the sending of nude or semi nude images between young people is illegal (even if they are in a relationship).

Please visit the Thinkuknow website (details below) for more advice and information on the legislation that governs the use of digital technology.

Lastly the Child Exploitation Online Protection centre (CEOP) have an online 'report abuse button' that allows anybody experiencing any form of inappropriate contact online to report it. Facebook doesn't have the CEOP report button on its site, however you can add it to your profile by typing in the word CEOP in your facebook search or by downloading it at http://apps.facebook.com/clickceop.

CEOP REPORT
ceop.police.uk

**We highly recommend you visit the following links for more advice:**

**www.thinkuknow.co.uk**
(Internet safety advice and resources for all)

**www.allfacebook.com/facebook-privacy-2009-02** (Two years old but still relevant)

**www.cybermentors.org.uk**
(A site where young people experiencing bullying can get help and support)

**From everyone at the Safe Schools and Communities Team**

**We hope you have a safe summer.**