**Internet safety**

**Policy statement**

At Acorns we understand that ICT, digital and mobile technology resources are now regarded as essential to support learning, teaching and personal and social development. They form part of an essential life skill. When using technology with young children and adults in their setting, professionals need to ensure that the resource is used safely and responsibly.

**Procedures**

**Why is internet use important?**

* The internet can be used to support learning as well as for social and personal development activities. It can motivate, engage and develop self-esteem, confidence and as a tool for the development of social capital. It is now regarded as a necessary tool, in setting, for practitioners and children.
* Internet is an essential element for education, business and social interaction. Acorns and Woodlands has a duty to provide children and young people with quality internet access as part of their experience.
* The internet is part of everyday life. Knowledge and experience of information and communication technology should be considered as essential. Developmentally appropriate access to computers and the internet in the early years contributes significantly to children and young people’s enjoyment of learning and development.
* Children and young people learn most effectively where they are given managed access to computers and control of their own learning experiences; however, such use carries and element of risk. Early years practitioners, their manager and volunteers, alongside parents and carers, should make children and young people award of the potential risks associated with online technologies. This empowers them with the knowledge and skills to keep safe, without limiting their learning opportunities and experiences.

**How will internet use enhance learning and personal and social development**

* Internet access for children and young people will be designed for educational aspects of social and developmental use and will include age-appropriate filtering.
* All practitioners should guide children and young people in online activities that will support their developmental and learning outcomes.

**How will internet access be authorised**

* All users of the internet will need to agree to responsible internet use
* For younger users, access to the internet will be closely supervised by an adult allowing access to specific and agreed sites only

**Responsibilities**

The designated Safeguarding Officer is responsible for online safety and manages the implementation of the internet policy and will ensure:

* Day to day responsibility for online safety issues and as such will have a leading role in implementing, monitoring and reviewing the Internet policy.
* All ICT users are award of the procedures that must be followed in the event of a potentially unsafe or inappropriate online incident taking place.
* The recording, monitoring and filing of reports in the event of a potentially unsafe or inappropriate online incident. This should include the creation of an incident log which should be used to inform future online safety practice.
* All necessary actions are taken to minimise the risk of any identified unsafe or inappropriate online incidents reoccurring.
* Effective training and online safety advice is delivered and available to all early year’s practitioners and volunteers.

**How will the risks be assessed?**

* In common with other media such as magazines, books and DVD’s, some material available via the Internet is unsuitable for children and young people. Acorns and Woodlands will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that users access only appropriate material. However, due to the international scale and linked nature of internet content, it is not possible to guarantee that unsuitable material will never appear on a computer. Acorns and Woodlands cannot accept liability for the material accessed, or any consequences of internet access but will uphold hight standards to try to prevent it.
* If a child or young person accidentally accesses inappropriate material, it must be reported to an adult immediately. Appropriate action should be taken to hide or minimise the window. The computer should not be switched off, nor the page closed, in order to allow investigations to take place. All such incidents must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer, who must ensure a report of the incident is made and that any further actions deemed necessary are taken.
* The use of computer systems without permission or for inappropriate purposes could constitute a criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act 1990.
* The safeguarding lead for Acorns and Woodlands Preschool will have an awareness of current e-safety advice and will embed this within the work with children and young people.

**How should website and social media content be managed?**

* Written permission from parents or carers will be obtained before photographs of children and young people are published on the settings web site.
* Full names of children and young people should not be used anywhere on the website, first names will only be used in association with photographs.
* Where audio and video are included, the nature of the items uploaded will not include content that allows the children to be identified.
* The safeguarding lead will take overall editorial responsibility and ensure that content is accurate and appropriate.

**On-line communications and social networking**

* Children will not be allowed access to social networking sites.
* Acorns and Woodlands preschool understands that some children using their afterschool and holiday club may have their own social networking site but use of the settings equipment is not permitted.

**Social Media Parental guide**

* Staff are advised not to accept invitations from parents to ‘friend’ on social networking sites and to do so may put them in a difficult work position. We expect them to maintain a professional relationship with you that is not compromised by sharing information on a social networking site. Staff will be asked to disclose who they are ‘friends’ with on social media.
* Similarly, we would ask that parents do not post information on their site that could affect Acorns and Woodlands in a negative manner.
* We would always take legal advice if our setting were to be quoted in a defamatory way on a social networking site.

**How will complaints be handled?**

* Responsibility for handling incidents will be delegated to the Safe guarding officer.
* Any complaint about practitioner misuse must be investigated and this may include any allegations made outside of the setting.
* Parents and children will need to work in partnership with practitioners to resolve issues should they arise.
* There may be occasions when the police must be contacted.
* Sanctions available include: Interview with designated safeguard lead, informing parents/carers and removal of internet or computer access.
* If a serious allegation is made against a staff member, then Ofsted will be notified and procedures outlined in the ‘Safeguarding policy’ will be followed.