

Many children and young people will talk to strangers when they go online. Traditionally educational messages have urged children not to talk to strangers but the reality is that many of them do, particularly when playing online games. Research from EU Kids Online suggests that although there is a risk associated with talking to strangers online, this does not automatically translate into harm.

It is important for children and young people to realise that they can never be sure who they are talking to when they are online.

A video from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre in the UK??? called The Adventures of Lee and Kim helps children to think about the importance of not sharing personal information with strangers online. It also demonstrates that just because an online friend seems like a nice person, this is not always the case. The resource comes with lesson plans and a range of other supporting activities that can be used in class.

A good way to demonstrate to pupils how easy it is to deceive someone online is to ask them to try and identify a mystery guest in school. This is a very simple but very effective activity which can make a huge impact. Ask a parent to help with the lesson and while the pupils are out of the classroom, hide the adult behind a screen so the pupils cannot see them, tell them that they have to pretend that they are another pupil from the school. Tell the pupils that they have 20 questions to try and work out who is behind the screen. Questions can only be answered with yes or no and these answers will be held up on a card so that the mystery guest does not need to speak. Pupils will very quickly think that they have identified the mystery guest as a pupil at the school but they will be shocked when they realise that they have in effect been tricked. This makes the point very powerfully that this can happen very easily online. You can never be sure who you are talking to