WATCH THE VIDEO: HOW ONE WORD COULD BE HIDING YOUR CHILD'S DIGITAL ANGST IN NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Internet Matters launches hard-hitting ad campaign as new research reveals 1 in 2 schoolchildren would not speak to their parents if upset by something online

- **As children face increased digital pressure during back to school period, UK-wide campaign helps parents decode their digital lives**
- **New study of 10,000 schoolchildren reveals more than <u>half</u> would not turn to their parents if they had been upset by something that happened online**
- **Internet Matters ambassador and child psychologist Dr Linda Papadopoulos gives tips on how to uncover your child's digital anxieties during the back to school period**
- **Campaign tackles issues including sexting, cyberbullying, inappropriate content and online peer pressure**

-EMBARGOED 00.01, September 4, 2017-

Monday, September 4, 2017. UK. Internet Matters today launches a powerful new campaign to help parents understand their children's hidden digital anxieties as they head back to school.

In a series of hard-hitting ads, the not-for-profit organisation highlights how children may feel reluctant to open up to their parents if they get into trouble online - during a time of the year where there is a heightened pressure on young people's digital lives.

Four separate videos have been created LINK focusing on the different key issues including cyberbullying, sexting, inappropriate content and the pressures to be popular online.

Each one plays on how children typically give their parents bland, one word answers to questions – but how that one word could be hiding their online torment.

One of the videos – focusing on sexting – reveals a conversation between a mother and daughter about a new boyfriend.

"Sophie's only been back at school for two minutes and I think she's already seeing someone. So I asked her 'when can we meet this new boyfriend of yours?' She just shrugged and said 'dunno'." The word 'dunno' is then revealed to be the spine of a hidden sentence.
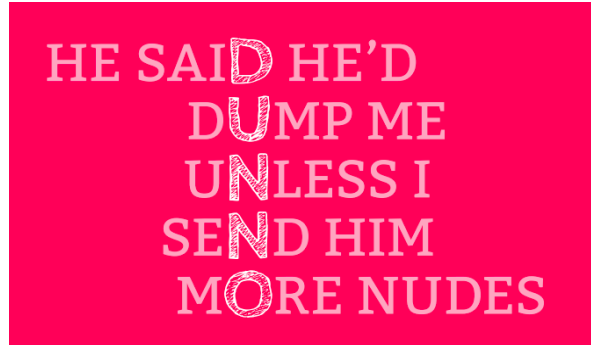
The videos coincide with the Back To School period - a time when children could feel under extra stress in their digital lives as they try to stay in touch with old school friends, contact new friends, keep up with the latest apps, devices and feel part of an online community.

It comes as a new survey by Internet Matters of over 10,000 schoolchildren revealed 52% would not speak to their parents if they had been upset by something online, compared to 91% who said they would turn to them if upset face-to-face.

Similarly, nine out of 10 (92%) of children said they would turn to their teacher if they had been upset face to face. Yet only 33% would turn to them if they had been upset by something online.

Surprisingly, children were more likely to turn to the police (60%), their friends (59%) or another family member (50%) before they told their parents about their online concerns.

The survey of six to 18-year-olds also revealed that 24% of children admitted they sometimes could not sleep because they were thinking about things that happened online.

One in seven children (14%) admitted to spending more than six hours online per day while one in three (35%) admitted they spend too much time online.

As part of the campaign, Internet Matters has created a series of internet safety guides, videos and advice at www.internetmatters.org/start-school-safe-online This includes conversation starters to help parents talk to their children about their digital world, as well as a device health check tool to help them give make sure their child's smartphone or tablet is safe.

Internet Matters ambassador Dr Linda Papadopoulos – a child psychologist and body language expert - said parents needed to get beyond their children's one word responses and start 'decoding their digital world'.

She said: "A new school year can be an intense time for children, full of change and full of excitement. Beyond the day-to-day emotional weight of starting a new term with new friends and fresh challenges, they may also face extra pressure in their online world, which can make them anxious.

"They may feel under increased strain to have a persona online, keeping up with old and new friends, or simply trying to feel part of a group.

"As their dynamics change, it's important that parents encourage their children to open up about their online activities and find out if their children are anxious about anything, as well as learning about some of the issues they might be facing including cyberbullying, sexting or seeing inappropriate content."

Carolyn Bunting, General Manager of Internet Matters said: "A new school year can be an exciting time for children, but it also brings a range of new issues for parents to be aware of when it comes to their child's online safety. Many children will be getting their first taste of digital independence as they move up to big school, others might be getting new smartphones or tablets, or be mixing with new groups of friends both offline and online.

"Parents need to make sure their kids' devices are set up safe and be made aware of what issues they need to talk to their children about when it comes to their online safety."

Parents can check their children's mobile devices are set-up safely here (including a simple video tutorial). For a guide to common online safety concerns click here. And for top tips on how to start a conversation about online safety here.

For more information on how to keep your children safe online visit internetmatters.org

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Editors' Notes

About Internet Matters
Internet Matters (internetmatters.org) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation which aims to help parents keep their children safe online. It was founded by the UK's four major broadband providers; BT, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media, with the BBC, Google, Dixons Carphone and Facebook joining as partners in 2016. Internet Matters is an Executive Member of UKCCIS (UK Council for Child Internet Safety) and an industry expert working with The Royal Foundation Taskforce on the Prevention of Cyberbullying, founded by the Duke of Cambridge. It was

awarded a grant from the Department for Education, to deliver the 'Make a noise' programme, a reporting and resource platform, developed alongside tootoot to help combat bullying in schools.

Dr Linda Papadopoulos is available for interview. Contact James Saville on 0203 770 7612.

*MAKE A NOISE YOUNG PEOPLE SURVEY, carried out in 2017. Responses from 10,028 children from Year 1 to Year 13 when asked: "Who would you turn to if you were upset by something online and face to face?"

	Online		Face to face		Total
Friends	59.33%	4766	86.47%	6946	8033
Parents	47.74%	4324	91.45%	8283	9057
Other family member	50.74%	3414	85.54%	5756	6729
School/teacher	33.75%	2279	92.03%	6215	6753
Police	60.12%	2587	71.25%	3066	4303
Other (please specify)					554
				Answered	**10028**
				Skipped	**328**

Internet Matters' tips to help parents decode their children's digital world before they head back to school:

Talk early and often
- Talk with children from an early age to make it easier to maintain good communication
- Have bitesize conversations that are relevant to them

Choose the right time
- Choose to talk when you are due to spend some time together, like over a meal or during their bedtime routine
- Bring digital experience into normal, everyday conversations.

Open up and share too
- Model the behaviour you want them to show by sharing about your day
- Be open and encouraging to make them feel supported.

Create a safe space for your child
- Ask open-ended questions
- Ensure that your child feels listened to rather than cornered
- When they start talking, hold off with questions and really listen
- Be prepared, calm and patient with them.

Three tips from Dr Linda Papadopoulos on decoding digital anxiety:
- Children may feel embarrassed or humiliated to tell you about what they've seen online so often asking 'How was your day?' doesn't always work; try asking 'what were the best and worst things about your day? It will elicit a more thoughtful response.

- Bed time provides the perfect opportunity to talk to your child about their digital anxieties. Children employ delay tactics when going to bed, so use it to your advantage and start a conversation about their online world. Remember a good night's sleep is invaluable in allowing them to feel refreshed to tackle issues on their own.
- Once you've managed to decode their digital world, keep conversations going and stay involved with what they're getting up to online.

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