



What is Starz Plus?

In education speak; Starz Plus is a 'learning platform'. There are many on the market but this one is designed specifically for primary-age children. In practice what that means is that it provides the kind of online tools – email messaging, blogs, forums, information areas etc. that you may be familiar with yourself from websites and social networking services.

Unlike social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, Starz Plus provides those tools so that they can be used for educational purposes at school and at home, and it is set up to be as safe as possible for your children.

The system is provided to us by Cambridgeshire County Council and is powered by E-schools.

Why are we using Starz Plus?

As a school, we regard the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a vital part of every child's education. It is part of the National Curriculum. It supports every other area of the curriculum. But it is also an essential life skill.

We need our children to have experience of the world as it is, and increasingly in ICT that means online. Working in new ways offers additional opportunities, and Starz Plus provides us with a means of communicating with a wider world and working together both within our school and with other schools.

Starz Plus also offers us the chance to allow you, as parents and carers to see more of the work that your children are doing. We encourage you to login (alongside your child) and see what they have been doing at school. The best way to find out what Starz Plus has to offer is to ask your child to show you.

How does Starz Plus help keep your child safe?

Following the publication of the Byron Review in 2008 all schools teach children about how to keep safe online. Some of this teaching and learning will happen in dedicated lessons and also through regular reminders to the class. Starz Plus is a place where children can demonstrate their understanding in a moderated environment. In school, Starz Plus includes the following features to keep your child safe:

- Entry to Starz Plus is by individual username and password
- Pupils can only email other pupils in school or trusted others
- Email can be monitored by teachers
- Pupils can send a report if they receive an upsetting message or blow the whistle on inappropriate content or behaviour
- Children are directed to age appropriate media and web based resources
- Discussion forums can be monitored



Report this message

When will my child start to use Starz Plus?

One of the things that makes Starz Plus different is that there is a wealth of educational resources and projects that we can access and take part in. These include links to carefully chosen child-friendly search tools and age appropriate resources for our children.

The local authority ICT Service also run a range of online activities that classes and pupils can take part in both in and out of school time. These include things like maths and literacy trails, writing, poetry and art activities as well as topical discussion forums.

In our school we also intend to use the system for diary writing (blog), setting homework, discussion forums, quizzes etc.

What are we doing with Starz Plus?

Children in our Nursery and Reception class(es) will be introduced to Starz Plus in an approach which is designed to be used only with an adult in school or with you at home. Once they are ready, your child will move to using the platform with a great level of independence.

All the while, with help and advice from teachers in school, the children will be learning about how best to keep themselves safe online. This will give them an excellent foundation for moving on to secondary school, and beyond, where the use of online systems is increasingly common.

Will using Starz Plus reduce the risk?

We know that even very young children are accessing the internet regularly. We believe that it is never too early for young children to start learning how to keep safe. Nowadays that includes the important skill of keeping safe online. Children can only learn that skill if they have direct experience of the technology, just as they can only learn to swim if they get in the water.

We reduce the risks of learning to swim by having some safety rules, qualified teachers, watchful lifeguards, and shallow water. Starz Plus reduces the chance that children will get out of their depth on the internet by giving them the opportunity to take early online strokes in a protected environment. If they make mistakes in Starz Plus there is someone available to rescue them.



Keeping a watchful eye in Starz Plus

In line with the best national advice on e-safety, Starz Plus keeps children safer through a combination of education, people and technology.

Our school uses Starz Plus to teach e-safety in specific lessons and through regular reminders to our children. We discuss the risks with them and they have helped draw up the rules for keeping safe. Within Starz Plus itself there are further activities available that they can access which will help them to further develop their competences in e-safety. We are particularly careful that children understand the importance of keeping their password private.

Starz Plus itself puts some restrictions on what children can do. In particular the email only allows our school's pupils to send emails to each other or other people that we have chosen to be 'trusted' partners.

The 'Whistleblowing' tool that allows children to raise any worries they have about behaviour within and beyond Starz Plus. Experienced Local Authority staff, who have all worked in school, also manage and monitor many of the activities that our children will be taking part in.

You, too, have a role. As with any use of the internet, parents can play a big part in keeping children safe. Start by talking to them regularly about what they are doing with Starz Plus.

Though Starz Plus can't reduce the risks to zero, we know that it has been a very safe environment during the last seven years for over 30,000 children across Cambridgeshire.

What should I do now?

Make sure you talk to your child about what they do in Starz+ both at school and home. If your child is in Key Stage 1 then you should sit with them for some short periods of time and look at what is online in the class area – you may find that the class teacher has instigated some things for you to do together on the class page or has put photos and information on the class page about things happening in the class.

Older children should be able to 'walk you through' the Starz+ platform and talk about what they do, who they message, and what activities they like to access etc. Teachers will also set homework for pupils in Starz + so you might want to see what this entails. Just try to keep in tune with what they are doing and also how long they spend online



Questions....Questions.... Questions....

There will be many more questions you will want to know about Starz Plus now and in the future such as:

- Q. How is individual privacy protected in Starz Plus?
- Q. Can my child download work or images at home?
- Q. Can anyone communicate with children in Starz Plus?
- Q. How can I see what my child is doing in Starz Plus?
- Q. Where is work stored in Starz Plus saved?
- Q. Who sets up Starz Plus accounts?
- Q. What happens when my child leaves primary school?

See the Starz Website to Find Out More
www.starzplus.org.uk