

# Half of primary school parents don't know the difference between safe and free chat according to new research

Submitted by: Kiss Communications

Thursday, 12 July 2012

---

Young children are spending more time playing online

(<http://www.parentdish.co.uk/2012/06/21/children-prefer-spending-time-online-to-reading-a-book/>) but according to new research over half of UK parents of primary school children don't know the difference between safe chat (a pre-selected list of messages or monitored chat) and free chat (kids are able to express themselves freely).

Interestingly the research found that dads were more clued up than mums about what the two forms of online chat were; with 58% of dads knowing the difference, compared with only 42% of mums.

Parents from the East Midlands fared worst in the country when it came to understanding how safe and free chat differs, with 67% of mums and dads confessing to not knowing the difference, the South West and London (both 57%) followed closely behind. East Anglian and Welsh parents were revealed as the most knowledgeable when it came to appreciating the different online 'chat' options, 65% and 63%, respectively. The research commissioned by Petra's Planet (<http://www.petrasplanet.com/>), a new safe virtual world for children to explore and learn about different cultures around the world, socialise and have fun online, interviewed 500 parents of primary school children from around the country.

Tomi Heinonen, CEO of Dramaforum (<http://dramaforum.fi/en/>), the company behind Petra's Planet is surprised by the findings, he said: "It is a concern that over 50% of parents with children aged 6-11 don't understand the difference between safe and free chat. If children are on a virtual world that allows free chat they could be communicating freely with people they don't know and who might not always be who they purport to be. Children are so savvy with their computer skills that they often find a way around the monitored chat."

He continued, "It's crucial that parents understand this fundamental difference and can guide their children accordingly. Petra's Planet is aimed at 6-11 year olds and in order to guarantee children's safety (<http://www.petrasplanet.com/site/parents/safety/>), the virtual world only has safe chat in the form of 'chat trees' which uses a pre-defined list of greetings, questions, expressions and statements. This makes it 100% safe and also complies with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) (<http://www.coppa.org/>). The safety of young children is of paramount importance to us and therefore we only use chat trees for the time being. This lets children explore freely in a safe, fun environment."

The research was commissioned in June 2012 and was independently carried out by OnePoll (<http://www.onepoll.com/about/>).

Parents and children can keep up-to-date on all the latest Petra's Planet news by following on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/#!/petrasplanet>), Facebook (<http://en-gb.facebook.com/PetrasPlanet/info?v=info>) and Pinterest (<http://pinterest.com/petrasplanet/>). To find out more information on Petra's Planet and keeping children safe, visit the virtual world's safety page (<http://www.petrasplanet.com/site/parents/safety/>).

## Editor's Notes

### Petra's Planet

Petra's Planet was created by Dramaforum Oy (<http://dramaforum.fi/en/>), a Finnish media company specialising in children's products.

The virtual world has been inspired by Eevamaria Halttunen's book series with the same title and based on the adventures of seven year old Petra who finds a way to travel around the globe. The virtual world continues the theme of curiosity, safety and adventure.

The team are passionate about valuing childhood, partnering with UNICEF in Finland, and keeping Petra's Planet as commercially free as possible.

## Contacts

For further information / Use of pictures / Interviews / Site Reviews / Competition Prizes

KISS Public Relations:

Laura Brown/Natalie Job/Justine Smith

T: + 44 (0)208 12345 75

E-mail: [laura@kisscom.co.uk](mailto:laura@kisscom.co.uk) (<mailto:laura@kisscom.co.uk>)

[natalie\\_job@kisscom.co.uk](mailto:natalie_job@kisscom.co.uk) ([mailto:natalie\\_job@kisscom.co.uk](mailto:natalie_job@kisscom.co.uk))

[justine@kisscom.co.uk](mailto:justine@kisscom.co.uk) (<mailto:justine@kisscom.co.uk>)