Golden Rules

- DO encourage your child to use the computer – to write things, to email friends and family and to look for information. Computer use is essential in today's world and can also be of huge educational benefit.

- DON'T think that everyone is entitled to their privacy and so your child has a right to a private computer! Your child can and will write emails you don't read, and access sites you don't see, but if they are doing all this in the midst of the family space, it is much harder for unscrupulous persons to abuse their trust.

- DO let your child see that you use the computer for family as well as work. Write letters or even create cards with images and text – this may inspire them to do the same. It is true that children do as we do, not as we say!

- DON'T think that writing on the computer, using a word processor, does not 'count' as writing practice. Writing involves many skills – thinking what you want to say, expressing it clearly and in an appropriate way for the person who you are writing to, using the correct words and spelling (most of) these correctly. The only skill not practised if your child is writing on the computer is hand-writing!

- DO encourage your child to use some of the educational materials widely available on the internet. The BBC site is amazing – children can watch parts of programmes again or investigate their favourite creature! CBeebies provides hours of fun for tiny tots and of course there is Hamilton@Home!