



SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2022

Welcome to the second Safeguarding newsletter of this academic year. We hope that you continue to find it useful and informative.

Safeguarding Leads.

Safeguarding is an integral part of school life and it is the responsibility of all involved in the lives of children to ensure that they are safe.

We have three Safeguarding Leads in school at this time – you can contact any one of them to discuss any safeguarding concerns or questions that you may have.

Name	Role	Safeguarding Role
Mr. B. McGregor	Head Teacher	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Mrs J. Davies	Deputy Head Teacher	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Mrs S Rushworth	SENCo	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Road Safety

Unfortunately, over the last couple of weeks we have had several incidents of children showing a lack of awareness around road safety.

We would kindly urge all parents, particularly Year 6 parents, to both model and ensure that your children know how to cross the road safely and understand the importance of not being on mobile phones as they cross the road. We have witnessed children running out in front of cars and running across the road without stopping to check if the road is clear. Fortunately, we have had no serious accidents.

We would also ask that parents are mindful of the narrowness and speed restrictions along Church Lane. This is particularly important at the start and end of the day when children and parents are crossing to get to and from school.

In addition, when collecting or dropping children off, if parking directly outside the school, please ensure that cars are not double parked. It is important that the road remains accessible and that vehicles can get through at all times. We would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation with this.

Online Safety

It has been brought to our attention that many of the children, particularly in Upper Key Stage 2, are accessing apps such as **WhatsApp** to keep in touch with their classmates. Unfortunately, on occasions, this is being used to send unkind and hurtful messages to one another. In some cases, children are being **added to groups without their consent**.

We kindly ask that not only do you continue to monitor your child's use of groups such as WhatsApp, but that you reinforce messages that we have shared in school around safe use of social media, including the impact on our own and other's mental health and well-being, cyberbullying and child-on-child abuse. Importantly, if you can reinforce that under no circumstances should anyone add a person to a group without their consent.

As a school, we are duty bound to report any concerns raised around child-on-child abuse that may take the form of online messages.

What Parents Need to Know about Social Media and Mental Health

Using social media has plenty of potential benefits for young people: it helps them stay connected to their friends, hear contrasting views on the world, find reassurance or support, and ease social anxiety. It also brings, however, a corresponding number of negative possibilities – including compulsive use, unhealthy comparisons with others online and exposure to harmful content.

Ironically – for a medium designed to enable engagement with other people – social platforms can actually lead to children feeling increasingly isolated and lonely, taking an obvious toll on their mental wellbeing. This month's guide has our top tips on how trusted adults can support healthier social media habits in young people.

According to Ofcom's 2022 Media Use and Attitudes report, six out ten children who use social media say that it makes them feel happy (59%) or closer to their friends (61%) "all or most of the time". By the same token, eight out of ten children were aware of other people being mean or unkind on social media, with 89% feeling pressure to be popular on the platforms they frequent.

Visit [@natonlinesafety](https://twitter.com/natonlinesafety) twitter feed for more information.

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it's needed. This guide focuses on one of many issues which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming, what they're posting and the interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down "rabbit holes" that aren't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing such "legal but harmful" content, lives are being impacted – sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which so entrails young people, but we can still help children to be aware of their mental wellness; recognising when something isn't OK – and knowing what to do about content that upsets them.

- 1. UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHM**
Algorithms rank content by user interest: someone who regularly interacts with sports news, say, will see the latest results at the top of their feed. Likewise, if a user browses content that can cause harm, that's what will be recommended to them in future. Someone who's had a bad day and looks for posts which reflect their mood will find similar content being suggested to them more and more.
- 2. AVOID THE MAIN FEEDS**
Avoiding the default feeds on social media platforms limits the amount of recommended content that's shown. Users can opt to only scroll through the accounts they follow, use restricted modes, or highlight posts that they don't want to see more of. Explore the platform safety settings to see how you can take control of what your child's phone shows them when they open the app.
- 3. DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE SEEN**
Chatting about what your child's seen online keeps you aware of the content they're interacting with. Don't assume that platforms are screening out inappropriate material, or even that your child would recognise content as being harmful. Discuss who they follow, what posts they like and what comes up in their feeds. It alarm bells ring, it could be time for a more in-depth talk or to seek support.
- 4. LEARN HOW TO HIDE CONTENT**
If your child stumbles across unsuitable content on social media, there's the option to hide that post as well as indicating you'd prefer any similar material not to be suggested in future. On some platforms, you might also be able to block posts that contain specific words, which is an excellent way to start taking control of what your child sees online.
- 5. SET DAILY LIMITS**
Phones and most apps can tell you how much they're being used. Spending too long online can mean a child misses out on other activities that are important to all-round wellbeing. You could set some family rules – for everyone to follow – around device use, such as screen time limits and tech-free spaces involving your child in creating this agreement makes them more likely to stick to it.
- 6. MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITY**
Keeping a discreet eye on how your child is using social media can help ensure they're not entering potentially dangerous situations. As they grow up, of course, children need space to exercise their independence – but you can still occasionally risk to see what they're looking at. Be transparent about your own social media use and try not to sound judgemental about your child's.
- 7. TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS**
Even for adults, it's tempting to check an email or message as soon as the alert sound jings. Push notifications encourage people to open their apps and spend time on their device, so turning them off will help your child to practise mindful use of tech. Most of us have other things that we need to focus on as a priority – and those notifications will still be there later, when we have more time.
- 8. USE DEVICES TOGETHER**
Giving children internet-enabled devices and complete freedom to explore platforms on their own can result in exposure to hugely damaging content. You could consider making a particular area of home a designated space to use phones, tablets and so on – making it much easier to monitor what content your child is viewing and (if necessary) steer them away from any potentially harmful paths.
- 9. ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES**
Mental health professionals often highlight the importance of exercise, quality time with loved ones, a balanced diet and restful sleep for our mental wellbeing. Spending hours on social media can cause us to sacrifice other activities that our brains need to feel well – so encouraging your child to put down their phone and enjoy something that doesn't involve a screen can be immensely beneficial.
- 10. TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE**
Most platforms default children's accounts to private, so only people they've accepted as friends can see their posts. This reduces the risk of hurtful or unkind comments, but – just like offline life – the digital world can still make children feel as if they need to react or look a certain way to fit in. Talk to your child about peer pressure, and listen to any concerns so you can provide the support they need.

Meet Our Expert
Shazia Dawood-Kim is executive headteacher at a specialist primary school and, as an emotional therapy coach, works with school leaders to focus on the SEND, mental health and wellbeing agenda. A passionate advocate for vulnerable learners, Shazia is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching and the author of *The Rainbow Within*, a book which supports children with SEMH needs.

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