



SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

ONLINE SAFETY & MENTAL HEALTH

On average teenagers spend more than 7 hours per day on social media, however this is likely to be a lot higher due to the increased time that has been spent at home and away from friends over recent lockdowns. It is important that we know how to protect our children when they use any online platform.

What's good about Social Media:

- staying connected with friends and family
- volunteer or get involved with a campaign, non-profit, or charity
- enhance their creativity by sharing ideas, music, and art



What's bad about Social Media:

The flipside is that social media can be haven of cyberbullying and other questionable activities. Without meaning to, children can share more than they should. Most teens post photos of themselves on their profiles, reveal their birthdates and interests, post where they live.....the list is endless. All this can make them easy targets for online predators and those that might mean them harm. Children can also face the possibility of a physical encounter with the wrong person. Many apps reveal the poster's location. This can tell anyone exactly where to find the person using the app. Children are unable to retract photos, videos, pictures and comments once they have been posted online, which means



Starting a conversation about online safety.....

It can be difficult to know how to start talking to your child about what they're doing online or who they might be speaking to. But talking regularly, like you would about their day at school, will help your child feel relaxed and mean that when they do have any worries, they're more likely to come and speak to you. It can help to:

- reassure them that you're interested in their life, offline and online. Recognise that they'll be using the internet to research homework as well talking to their friends.
- ask your child to show you what they enjoy doing online or apps they're using so you can understand them.
- be positive but also open about anything you're worried about. You could say "I think this site's really good" or "I'm a little worried about things I've seen here."
- ask them if they're worried about anything, and let them know they can come to you.
- ask them about their friends online and how they know they are who they say they are.

Parental controls are an important way to keep your child safe online.

Parental controls can be used to block upsetting or harmful content, control in-app purchases or manage how long your child spends online. **And the good news is parental controls are really easy to set up.**

Innocent searches sometimes reveal not so innocent results. So if you're worried about what your child is searching for online, who they're talking to or what they're seeing, there are some simple rules you can take.

It's simple to get started. And, along with talking to your child regularly, using parental controls is one of the best ways to help keep children safe online. Here are some of the social media sites that your children may use.....

TikTok

TikTok is a video and music-based social media app that allows users to create and share short videos with special effects.

Users can create and upload their own videos where they lip-synch, sing, dance, or just talk. You can also browse and interact with other users' content, which covers a wide range of topics, songs, and styles.

What should parents know about the app?

When signing up on TikTok, user profiles are made "public" by default - meaning anyone can view videos that your children upload.

TikTok is mostly based on music and video - so profanity and suggestive clothing/dancing are the most obvious sources of adult content.

But the app also encourages some themes that are much more mature than their 16+ rating would suggest.

Strangers can send private messages - so if your child's account remains public, they may be receiving messages from complete strangers.

People who send direct messages can access data, such as where the recipient lives.

But one of the app's positives is the ability to turn on the 'digital wellbeing' setting.

Once turned on, the setting will set time limits on app use, which can help your child moderate the time they spend on their phone.

This setting also allows a parent to put restrictions on their child's account - but not all material is

Snapchat

Snapchat is a popular messaging app that lets users exchange pictures and videos (called snaps). The unique part of Snapchat is the "snaps" are only available for viewing for a set period of time.

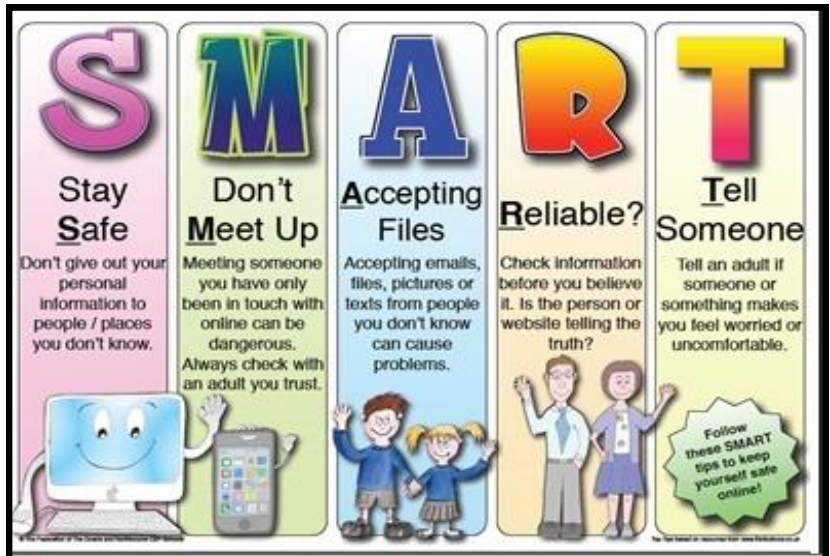


The Dangers of Snapchat

Once a recipient looks at the "snap" it disappears from the device and the servers after an allotted amount of time. Once the snap has been opened and viewed it simply ceases to exist. This makes it nearly impossible for parents to see what their child is doing within the application.

Because "snaps" are gone as soon as they are opened, parents complain they can not keep an active tab on their child's use of the application. For the same reason, some teens feel that any "snap" is fair game and safe because it quickly disappears. Because there is no log of their correspondence some teens may feel the app is completely "safe" and they can send pictures and messages that they would not otherwise send if the image could be captured, or their activity can be tracked.

The 'Snap Map' allows users to share their location with anyone on their Snapchat friends list. Users are able to see the exact



The SMART acronym graphic consists of five vertical panels, each with a large letter at the top and a corresponding safety tip below. The panels are: 1. 'S' Stay Safe: Don't give out your personal information to people / places you don't know. 2. 'M' Don't Meet Up: Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Always check with an adult you trust. 3. 'A' Accepting Files: Accepting emails, files, pictures or texts from people you don't know can cause problems. 4. 'R' Reliable?: Check information before you believe it. Is the person or website telling the truth? 5. 'T' Tell Someone: Tell an adult if someone or something makes you feel worried or uncomfortable. At the bottom right, a green starburst says 'Follow these SMART tips to keep yourself safe online!'.

Mental Health in Young People

Mental health is about **how we think, feel and act**. Just like physical health: everybody has it and we need to take care of it. Our mental health is on a spectrum, and can range from good to poor.

Good mental health can help you to think positively, feel confident and act calmly.

If you have poor mental health, you might find that the way you're thinking, feeling or acting becomes difficult to cope with. You might not enjoy things you used to like doing. You might feel sad or angry for a longer time than usual. Or you might feel like you can't control how you feel or behave.

Supporting your child's Mental Health

One in four people experience a mental health problem every year. Everyone needs help from time to time to deal with the stresses of modern life and the pandemic added an extra source of anxiety to children's lives. It is now more important than ever that we support young people's mental health and help them to develop the resilience and resources to keep themselves mentally healthy.

At Sir Graham Balfour School we support students to have good mental health through our curriculum and support services. We believe it is important that they are aware of trusted resources and contacts if they need help. Families also play a vital role in supporting young peoples' mental health and we know that the best support happens when school, students and families communicate.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Everyone has mental health, like physical health, and we all have the ability to manage our mental health. Managing our own lifestyle to promote positive wellbeing is important. To give our students the best chance of achieving and maintaining good mental health, they should:

- Get regular and quality sleep
- Exercise daily (even for just 20 minutes)
- Eat a healthy diet
- Keep hydrated
- Get some sunshine (trickier in the UK at times)
- Keep technology interaction (particularly social media) to a healthy level
- Stop worrying about the things you can't control and focus on the things you can
- Surround yourself with good people and cut toxic people out of your life (This may well be some family and friends)
- Stop comparing yourself to other people, there will always be someone better at certain things and vice versa
- Being thankful for what you do have, rather than the things you don't (We have won the lottery by being born in this country)
- Practise mindfulness and breathing techniques, as they do work

Top tips to support children and young people

Be there to listen

Regularly ask how they're doing so they get used to talking about their feelings and know there's always someone to listen if they want it. Find out how to create a space where they will open up.

[How to start a conversation with your child](#)



Support them through difficulties

Pay attention to their emotions and behaviour, and try to help them work through difficulties. It's not always easy when faced with challenging behaviour, but try to help them understand what they're feeling and why.

[Help with difficult behaviour and emotions](#)



Stay involved in their life

Show interest in their life and the things important to them. It not only helps them value who they are but also makes it easier for you to spot problems and support them.



Encourage their interests

Being active or creative, learning new things and being a part of a team help connect us with others and are important ways we can all help our mental health. Support and encourage them to explore their interests, whatever they are.



Take what they say seriously

Listening to and valuing what they say, without judging their feelings, in turn makes them feel valued. Consider how to help them process and work through their emotions in a more constructive way.

[The Anna Freud Centre support guide](#)



Build positive routines

We know it still may not be easy, but try to reintroduce structure around regular routines, healthy eating and exercise. A good night's sleep is also really important – try to get them back into routines that fit with school or college.

[Sleep tips for children](#)



Bullying and Mental Health

According to the NSPCC, “Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It’s usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.”

Young people who have experienced bullying are more likely to develop an anxiety disorder or suffer from depression. The same applies to those that are isolated and have difficulties with friendships at school.

Fears and worries are a normal part of child development and the content of fears can change according to the individual’s developmental stage. Anxiety disorders occur when the intensity of the fear or worry is so high that it starts to impact on the child’s functioning and well-being. Depression affects just under 3% of children under the age of 13 and over 5% of 13-18-year olds. An estimated 20% will have had one depressive episode before the age of 18.

Bullying is an understandable reason for a child to feel sad or anxious but it need not mean they are suffering from anxiety or depression. However, regardless of the impact on the child, bullying in any form is never acceptable. Whether the bullying takes place at school, at home, online or somewhere else, it should be reported to the relevant authority and those responsible should be held to account.

When to seek help

If you notice any symptoms of depression or anxiety as a result of your child being bullied, and these persist or worsen, then you should refer to a professional. If left untreated, depression and anxiety can continue into adulthood and cause significant problems. Some children may be fearful to talk about being bullied. In some cases the bully might have threatened them with consequences if they speak out about the abuse. So as a parent, teacher or carer, it’s important for us to provide a safe, open and non-judgemental environment for the child to be able to discuss their concerns.

Reporting Concerns about unwanted touching or when something just does not feel right.




If your son/daughter ever says they are unhappy about a situation how another person has touched them when they did not want, asked them to send a nude picture or just when something just does not feel right. Please let them know that they must go and see Mrs Metcalfe or Mrs Norman as soon as possible.

If your child is experiencing any difficulties and does not know who to speak to regarding issues such as bullying or emotional wellbeing, or they have concerns about a friend; they can contact a member of the pastoral team for urgent help or by using the following email address:

help@sirgrahambalfour.staffs.sch.uk

RELATIONSHIP, SEX EDUCATION TOPICS

SUMMER TERM 2024

Year 10	The risks associated with substance use.	
Year 9	Making decisions and managing peer pressure about films and online viewing. What is appropriate and	
Year 8	County Lines - the impact on young people, families and the community	
Year 7	Healthy relationships including sexuality and gender identity.	