



ONLINE SAFETY NEWSLETTER.

Online Harm and Safety

As more of children's lives move online, new opportunities and challenges continue to emerge. At The Heathland School we acknowledge that the internet can be a positive space for learning, creativity, connection and support. However, it can also expose children and young people to risks such as grooming, exploitation, bullying and harmful content.

In 2024, Ofcom found that:

- 24% of 5 -7 year olds own a smartphone.
- 76% of 5 -7 year olds use a tablet.
- 38% of 5 -7 year olds use social media.
- 41% of 5 -7 year olds play games online.
- 32% of 8- 17 year olds have seen something upsetting online.

This newsletter provides information and guidance which I hope you find helpful. We would certainly appreciate any feedback you may have.

If you are interested in contributing to the government's consultation on social media, please click on this link:

[Growing up in the online world: a national consultation - GOV.UK](#)

SUPPORTING YOUR TEENAGER ON SOCIAL MEDIA

As your teenager steps into the digital world, knowing how to guide and support them can feel overwhelming. That's why **Media Smart**, in partnership with TikTok, has created '**Teens, Social Media and You**' a new film-led campaign with free resources to help parents and careers navigate discussion about on-line safety, digital wellbeing, and responsible social media use.

Download the free guide and watch the films today [here](#)

APP SAFETY SETTINGS

With the Online Safety Act now in force, there's been a lot of focus on how technology companies manage their safety features. While these settings aren't perfect, they do play an important part in helping to keep children safe online.

This is a good time to check the safety settings on the apps your child uses and make sure they're appropriate for their age. The **Internet Matters** website has clear, step-by-step guides for many popular apps, including Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube. You can find them here:

- Discord app settings - [HERE \(13+\)](#)
- TikTok parental controls - [HERE \(13+\)](#)
- Snapchat parental controls - [HERE \(13+\)](#)
- Instagram parental controls - [HERE \(13+\)](#)
- FaceTime privacy and safety settings - [HERE \(13+\)](#)
- WhatsApp privacy guide - [HERE \(13+\)](#)

WHAT IS ONLINE HARM?

Online harm or abuse can occur through social media, messaging apps, virtual reality spaces (Metaverse), online gaming platforms, streaming services, email and chat rooms. Online abuse may include bullying, harassment, grooming, sexual exploitation, exposure to sexually explicit or violent content, radicalisation, sharing or soliciting images, and sextortion.

Online gaming may also expose children and young people to financial risks such as loot boxes or in-game purchases, which have been compared to gambling and may be used by perpetrators as a means of coercion or exploitation.

TALK CHECKLIST: PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS

The Internet Watch Foundation's TALK Checklist offers vital guidance for parents and carers to protect children from online sexual abuse. The checklist encourages open conversations with children about online safety, setting clear digital ground rules, understanding the platforms and apps they use, and utilising available tools and settings to enhance online security. By following these steps, families can create a safer online environment and reduce the risk of exploitation. For comprehensive resources and support, visit the TALK Checklist at talk.iwf.org.uk.

PRACTICAL TOOLS AND SUPPORT

Managing screen time

Screens are a normal part of life for both children and adults these days. 'Screen time' can mean any time spent looking at a screen. This means TV, DVDs, Games consoles, tablet, smart phone, laptops and PCs.

There are many ways in which screen time can be beneficial such as keeping in touch with family and friends who live further away, providing engaging educational games and apps which help children learn. But equally, there have been many studies which clearly show the negative effects of too much screen time for children of all ages. The important thing is to keep children safe and to try to find the right balance.

Young people aged 11-18

CEOP have created a national online safety education programme for [young people aged 11-18](#). Here they can learn about a range of issues such as online relationships, using social media, staying safe and what to do if something goes wrong. [Childnet](#) have a range of help and advice for young people aged 11-18 to help them understand issues around online safety.