

Holmer C. E. Academy—Safeguarding Newsletter

Issue 6 - February 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to the sixth edition of our parent safeguarding newsletter. As a parent, it's essential to be aware of age ratings for social media platforms to ensure your child's online safety and appropriate digital development. Here's some information to guide you. If you have any questions, please do ask.

Jayne Maund

Head Teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead

Get to know age restrictions!

Most social media platforms have a legal minimum age requirement for users.



Tik Tok requires users to be at least 13, with parental permission for users under 18.



Tik Tok hosts a wide range of content, including user-generated videos that may not be suitable for younger audiences. There's a risk of exposure to explicit language, violence, suggestive themes, and other inappropriate content.

Understanding the Ratings:

Age ratings are set by social media platforms based on legal requirements and their assessment of the content and interactions within the app. They consider factors such as privacy risks, exposure to inappropriate content, and potential online interactions with strangers.

Parental Controls and Supervision:

Even if your child meets the age requirements, it's crucial to supervise their online activities and use parental controls available on most platforms. These controls allow you to manage your child's privacy settings, control who can contact them, and restrict access to certain content. Instructions on setting parental controls on a wide range of devices and platforms are available here:



The Safeguarding team.
If you have any concerns about a child's welfare or safety, please speak to a member of the schools safe-guarding team



Jayne Maund Designated Safeguard Lead



Anna Keating Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead



Rachel Anderson Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/>

Educating Your Child:

Talk to your child about the importance of online safety, privacy, and responsible digital citizenship. Teach them about the risks of sharing personal information online, interacting with strangers, and the impact of their online behaviour on themselves and others.

Monitoring and Communication:

Keep an open line of communication with your child about their online experiences. Encourage them to come to you if they encounter anything uncomfortable or concerning online. Regularly monitor their social media usage and discuss any issues or questions that arise.

Setting Limits:

Consider setting limits on your child's screen time and access to social media. Establish clear rules and boundaries regarding when and how they can use social media and encourage them to engage in offline activities and face-to-face interactions.

Staying Informed:

Stay updated on the latest trends and developments in social media, as well as any changes to age ratings or platform policies. This will help you make informed decisions about your child's online activities and safety.

Remember that every child is different, and what works for one may not work for another. It's essential to tailor your approach to your child's age, maturity level, and individual needs while prioritizing their safety and well-being in the digital world.

Further information

Parent Zone have published this article about why age ratings matter:
<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/age-ratings>

Fake Profiles and Cyberbullying:

Setting up a profile impersonating somebody else with the intention of being unkind to others/to cause embarrassment to the individual is a form of cyberbullying. If your child has set up a fake profile, talk to them about how this is a form of bullying and therefore not acceptable.

It is important that we talk to our children about the issue of cyberbullying and let them know that if they are ever a victim of it then it is not their fault, and they should tell you (or a trusted adult) straightaway. Talk to your child about reporting and blocking tools on social media or online games and show them how to use them to report any form of bullying.

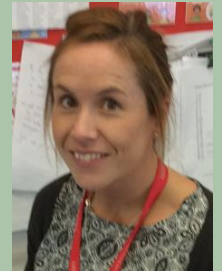
You can read more about cyberbullying here:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/in-fo-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/bullying-cyberbullying/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/>



Zoe Jackson
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Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

To speak to the team - [\(01432\) 260800](tel:01432260800)

To email the team - cypd@herefordshire.gov.uk

Emergency Duty Team

[\(01905\) 768020](tel:01905768020)
(out of hours number for when MASH are unavailable)

PERSUASIVE DESIGN ONLINE

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Persuasive design refers to the techniques that companies employ to influence our thoughts and behaviours when we're on the internet. These approaches can be spotted on websites, in apps and even as part of some video games. Persuasive design means that this content has been deliberately presented in a way that's intended to encourage you to spend your time or money (or both). These methods often prove highly effective at keeping people engaged and invested for longer than we might expect.

POTENTIAL ADDICTION

In the digital world, persuasive design can make certain activities more addictive and harder to walk away from: some people may begin to feel anxious or irritated without access to their device or their favourite app, for example. It can also often leave users feeling isolated, as – if they spend most of their time on social media – they may start to find it difficult to talk to other people in real life.

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Scrolling online or gaming without regular breaks is proven to be harmful to our mental health. The constant bombardment of news stories (many of them negative), images and influencers' posts can create sensations of unease, uncertainty and FOMO (fear of missing out). Young people can get so immersed in this environment that they become less likely to spot misleading posts.

PROLONGED SCROLLING

Social media can draw any of us – regardless of age – into a continuous pattern of refreshing our screen, following posts and links down rabbit holes or reading countless comments made by others. This endless scrolling can eat up time which could have been spent on more productive activities. It could also lead younger users into areas of the online world which aren't age appropriate.

SENSORY OVERLOAD

Repetitively scrolling, clicking on links or playing games can create an unending stream of new information and visual stimuli. Put in this way, social media isn't exactly renowned as a carefree, chilled-out environment. Such overstimulation can become too much for young people to handle, resulting in sensory overload and causing them to feel stressed, overwhelmed and exhausted.

COSTLY ADDITIONS

Video games sometimes display offers for downloadable content or loot boxes which can be bought with real money. While these 'microtransactions' temptingly promise to improve a player's gaming experience, most of the time they are money sinks. Young people in particular, excited by the chance of enhancing their game, could spend quite a sizeable sum very quickly indeed.

PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

Hours spent sitting and scrolling means far less time moving around and getting exercise, hardly ideal for a young person's physical health. Additionally, prolonged exposure to the light given off by a phone's screen can lead to eye fatigue and discomfort, especially if viewing it in the dark. Extended phone use before bed can also impact on sleep quality, affecting mood and energy levels over the following days.

Advice for Parents & Carers

ESTABLISH LIMITS

Talk to your child about setting some time limits on how long they can use their phone, tablet or console in the evenings or at weekends – or perhaps how often they can go on a specific app, game or website. You could also decide to involve the whole family in creating this shared screen time agreement, making things fair (and healthier) for everyone.

NIX NOTIFICATIONS

Stop knee-jerk responses at the source by turning off push notifications and alerts. Whether it's a gaming notification or a social media update, these not-so-gentle reminders are designed to catch our attention and lure us back to our device. Switching them off – or even deleting any particularly intrusive apps – can help prevent your child from being pulled back into the online world.

ENCOURAGE MINDFULNESS

Acknowledging any addiction is key in overcoming it – and compulsive scrolling is no different. If anything mentioned in this guide sounds familiar, it could help to have an honest, open chat with your child about how much time they spend online. Get them to think about how often they scroll through social media aimlessly or habitually open it up whenever they have a spare moment.

MAKE A CHECKLIST

Considering a list of relevant questions can be an effective way of helping children figure out why they're scrolling on certain sites or consuming particular pieces of content. A checklist can prompt young people to ask themselves if they're learning anything or benefiting from this activity – or if they're wasting their time. Taking a step back can sometimes help us to see things more clearly.

Meet Our Expert

Barbara Jennings has more than 20 years' experience in the National Online Safety and eSafety education (NOS) sector as a leading workshop and training for young people, parents and schools, where she is an expert on internet safety and the UK Department of Education.



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