

St Ives School

End of Year Newsletter

July 2026



Welcome to the Summer end of year St Ives School Safeguarding newsletter

As we reach the end of another busy and successful school year, we would like to wish all our students and families a safe, enjoyable and restful summer break. While the summer holiday provides an opportunity to relax, spend time with family and friends, and recharge for the year ahead, we recognise that longer breaks can sometimes bring additional challenges for young people and their families. Although school will be closed during the summer holiday, a wide range of support remains available for students, parents, carers and extended family members. Whether you are looking for emotional wellbeing support, practical advice, family services, holiday activities or help during difficult times, there are organisations and community services ready to help throughout the break.

Within this newsletter you will find information about local support services, wellbeing resources, holiday activity programmes and guidance on where to seek help if needed.

We encourage families to keep this information handy and make use of the support available. We hope everyone is able to enjoy a positive summer, take time to rest and make lasting memories. We look forward to welcoming all students back in September, ready for another exciting year ahead.

St Ives School Safeguarding and Pastoral Team are trained to an advanced level in all aspects of safeguarding and wellbeing support. We are available to speak to students, parents or members of the community for advice, guidance and support. Please contact us if you would like to discuss any concerns

Mrs Clemson - DSL

lclemson@stives.tpacademytrust.org

Mrs Withers – Deputy DSL

rwithers@stives.tpacademytrust.org

Or

safeguarding@stives.tpacademytrust.org

For urgent Safeguarding concerns

Contact: MARU 0300 123 1116

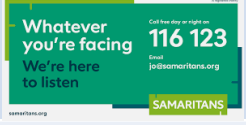
Summer Support

We know that, despite hopeful rest and relaxation, school holidays can also bring additional difficulties, stress and worry. Therefore, we thought it would be useful to remind you of some sources of support in Cornwall, while school and other services may be closed.

A good place to start is the **Early Help Hub** which offers access to a range of support services for children, young people and families. You can find a list of the different support services they available at [Early help - Cornwall Council](#) (01872 322277)

Your GP will also be able to provide advice and help direct you to appropriate support services if needed.

If at any time you feel that someone is at risk of immediate harm, help is available through the **Multi-Agency Referral Unit** on **0300 123 1116** or the Emergency Services on Tel: 101/999.
For specific areas of need, you may find the links below useful:

Need	Agency	Contact
EMOTIONAL WELLBEING/ MENTAL HEALTH	 Kooth	http://www.kooth.com/ http://www.xenzone.com/
	 NHS Mental Health Helpline	Mental Health Helpline for Urgent Help - NHS (www.nhs.uk) 0800 038 5300
	 Child Adolescent Mental health Service (CAMHS)	CAMHS Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (cornwallft.nhs.uk)
	 Young Minds	YoungMinds Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People YoungMinds
	 Mind Cornwall	Welcome to Cornwall Mind - Cornwall Mind
	 Kernow Connect	https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/how-we-can-help/our-local-services/find-our-services-near-you/kernow-connect/ 01872 321486
	 Action for Children Webchat	1:1 chat - Parent Talk (actionforchildren.org.uk)
	 Childline	Childline Childline 0800 1111
	 Samaritans	Samaritans Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy Here to listen 116 123
	 Young People Cornwall	Making Waves - Young People Cornwall 01872 22244
BEREAVEMENT	 Penhaligon's Friends	Penhaligons Friends - A Cornish charity supporting bereaved children & young people
DRUG/ALCOHOL MISUSE	 YZUP	https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/
SEXUAL HEALTH	 Brook	0300 30 30 714



The Time2Move Holiday Programme provides fun physical activity and healthy food for children aged between 5 and 16 years old during the school holidays in Cornwall.

The programme is fully funded by the Department for Education and is for children that are eligible for benefits related free school meals. It is known nationally as the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

Here you'll find everything you need to know – whether you're a parent or carer, looking to book a session or request SEND support; or an activity provider, looking to register for the programme.

<https://www.activecornwall.org/t2mholidayprogramme/>



At Coast Activity Programme we are a dedicated team of staff who are passionate about supporting children in their health and well-being. We love to provide fun and engaging activities for all children and to see the children have fun and develop skills

[Coast Activity Programme - Coast Activity Programme](#)



CORNWALL ACCESSIBLE ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME

CHARITY NUMBER 1169565

CAAP is a small charity based in Cornwall formed by a group of parents of children with additional needs to support families to access activities during school holidays.

Every child or young person registered with CAAP has a disability or additional need that impacts on their ability to attend mainstream holiday activities. They typically cannot play in their own communities because of safety issues and often spend school holidays indoors or in front of screens. School holidays are a time of great stress for families with disabled children with the lack of structure and this also impacts on siblings.

Often mainstream providers are not trained in supporting disabled children, do not have the correct equipment or there is additional costs of providing one to one support.

Many families in our group struggle to go to the beach or enjoy the outdoors because of their child's disability or additional need. We have a significant number of families who have a child on the autistic spectrum who struggle to go out in school holidays because of their child's behaviour.

<https://www.caapuk.co.uk/>



30 acres of beautiful open-access green space on Penbeagle Hill overlooking St Ives.

A wildlife haven encouraging biodiversity, planted for the benefit of wildlife and the community.

A place where people can socialise, work, learn, play, relax and enjoy the fruits of their labour.

- The St Ives community will be able to enjoy access to the local green space, to enjoy nature walks and opportunity to pick free fruit.
- The community can have pride in a sustainable, species-rich ecosystem of edible and useful plants, encouraging biodiversity and safe spaces for wildlife.
- The diverse natural areas and the Community Learning Centre will assist in environmental education and enrich learning and engagement with nature for the whole community including schools and community groups.

<https://www.stivesorchard.co.uk/>



Kooth is a free, safe and anonymous online platform providing digital mental health and wellbeing advice, support, and guidance to all young people aged 10-18.

Through the website and social media apps young people can access live 1-2-1 chat sessions and 24hr messaging with qualified practitioners, access moderated peer-to-peer discussions, and receive self-help with mini-activities, goal setting, and a personal journal.

Children and young people can self-refer, with no thresholds to access the service, and no waiting lists.

Website: www.kooth.com



Self-Harm Guidance

Self-Harm is a significant issue among young people nationally. The causes behind self-harm can come from many places, sometimes it's a reaction to difficult emotions. In other cases it can be related to poor self-worth and self confidence. In any case it is not only a traumatic practice for many, it is also physically perilous. Attempts at self-harm can sadly result in unforeseen injuries that may take years to heal, and produce life-long mental and bodily scars. To find out more about self-harm and how to deal with it, please follow the link below:

Website: www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/my-feelings/self-harm

ChatHealth
Parent Line 0-5



07312 263 423



ChatHealth
Parent Line 5-19



07312 263 499

ChatHealth Young
People 11-19



07312 263 096



ChatHealth
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

www.cornwall.gov.uk/chathealth

Get
confidential
health and
wellbeing advice
and support

cornwall.gov.uk

Users can send a text message, anonymously if they wish, to Health Visiting and School Nursing to get confidential help and advice about a range of health concerns, including:

- Sleep
- Child development
- Support with behaviour
- Toileting
- Feeding and nutrition
- Keeping safe and healthy
- Childhood illnesses and support with medical conditions at school
- Emotional, mental health and wellbeing
- Relationships
- Smoking and vaping
- Drugs and alcohol

The text messaging service is available Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) from 9am to 5pm. When a text message is sent to the numbers, an automated reply confirms the message has been received. A trained healthcare professional will reply to the message during office hours within 48 hours.

Free Food Collections from St Ives Community Foodshare

Mondays

5.30pm

**Mike Peters estate
car park**

TR26 2FS

Tuesdays

12.30pm

**Palemon Best Car
Park**

TR26 2AH

Wednesdays

10.30am

**St Johns in the
fields church hall**

TR26 2FB

Thursdays

5.30pm

**St Ives RFC left side
of building**

TR26 1ER

Fridays

5.30pm

**Palemon Best
Car Park**

TR26 2AH

Sundays

11.30am

St Ives RFC.

TR26 1ER



**St Ives Foodbank @
Edward Hain Centre,
Albany Terrace
St Ives**



HAYLE FOOD BANK
07713 171495
halyefoodbank@gmail.com

How to get support

If you or anyone you know needs a short-term helping hand in the form of food parcels because of loss of earnings, awaiting benefits, homelessness, ill health, unexpected car bill etc. etc. then please get in touch

1. Self – refer to get up to 3 weeks food parcels within a 12 month period by sending an email to haylefoodbank@gmail.com or ring 07713 171495 , or drop into Hayle Methodist Church (up from the War Memorial) stating:

- a. Name / address / contact number / contact email**
 - b. Number of adults in your household, number / ages / genders of young people under 18 (this is so food / toiletries can be effectively targeted), any pets (we do pet food!).**
 - c. Any dietary requirements (vegetarian / allergies / lack of cooking facilities / if you prefer tea or coffee).**
 - d. Brief details of why you need the support – awaiting benefits, cost of living, unexpected bills etc**
- To get further support after your first parcel you will then need to email or phone in a request for food before 12pm on the**

HAYLE COMMUNITY FOOD CUPBOARD AND FOOD SHARE

Hayle has two community food cupboards, one in the Copperhouse outside Phillack Church Hall and one at Foundry Square. The cupboards are stocked and maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers who collect surplus food from local supermarkets, which could otherwise go to landfill.

PENZANCE FOOD BANK

Contact – 07925 298587

For Current needs and further information visit

CTIPA Food Bank's Facebook page or

www.churchestogetherinpenzance.co.uk

Additional Support

Penzance Support Hub – Young People Cornwall

Where: [Lescudjack Centre, Penzance, TR18 3PE](#)

When: Mondays 3:30pm – 5:30pm

Safe place for children and young people who are feeling down or struggling with their emotions. Information, advice and guidance.

West Cornwall Legal Advice Centre

Where: [Trelya's Community Hub, the Lescudjack Centre, Treneere, Penzance](#)

When: Thursdays 5:30pm – 7:30pm – Drop in

Providing free, independent drop-in and appointment based legal assistance.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Feeling a genuine sense of belonging is essential for the emotional and social development of children and young people. Belonging significantly boosts self-esteem, resilience, and mental wellbeing, reducing feelings of isolation and anxiety. This guide provides practical strategies to help parents and educators cultivate inclusive environments, enhancing both academic outcomes and overall happiness among young people.

1 CELEBRATE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Acknowledge and celebrate the uniqueness of every child. Promoting diversity and inclusion creates an environment where differences are valued rather than stigmatised. This acceptance empowers children to confidently express their identities and feel genuinely included, fostering a robust sense of belonging within both school and home settings.

2 CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

Regularly communicate and actively listen to children, showing genuine interest in their thoughts and experiences. Creating open communication channels helps young people feel heard and valued. This approach not only builds trust but also reinforces children's perception of themselves as a vital part of their family, school and community.

3 MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Give children opportunities to actively participate and contribute, whether in classrooms, at home, or in community activities. Meaningful participation helps children feel their input matters, reinforcing a sense of purpose and value. Including them in decisions and responsibilities enhances their self-worth, promoting a deeper sense of belonging and inclusion.

4 FOSTER STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Support and encourage positive relationships between peers, educators, and families. Strong, healthy relationships significantly impact a child's sense of belonging, providing emotional support and reducing feelings of loneliness. Facilitate social interactions through group activities, teamwork, and collaborative learning to strengthen these vital connections.

5 CREATE INCLUSIVE SPACES

Design environments that reflect diversity and are welcoming for everyone. Inclusive spaces where all children see themselves represented can dramatically improve their feelings of safety and acceptance. Consider classroom displays, books, and resources that celebrate various cultures, abilities, and backgrounds to visibly reinforce inclusivity and belonging.

6 MODEL POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Adults play a crucial role by demonstrating inclusive, empathetic, and respectful behaviours. Modelling positive interactions and attitudes sets a clear standard for children to follow. Children are likely to replicate inclusive behaviour, creating a supportive community atmosphere where everyone feels accepted and valued for who they are.

7 BUILD EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Teach and encourage emotional expression and understanding among children. Developing emotional literacy enables young people to articulate their feelings and empathise with others. An emotionally intelligent environment cultivates mutual respect and compassion, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and interpersonal connection within groups.

8 SUPPORT PEER MENTORSHIP

Encourage peer mentorship or buddy systems within educational settings. Peer support enhances feelings of connectedness and security, reducing feelings of isolation. When children support one another, they naturally build community bonds, nurturing a supportive culture where belonging and friendship thrive.

9 RECOGNISE EFFORTS REGULARLY

Consistently acknowledge children's contributions and achievements, however small. Recognition reinforces a child's understanding that their presence and efforts are important. Celebrating individual and collective successes helps cultivate a positive environment where children feel acknowledged, motivated, and deeply connected to peers and adults around them.

10 ADDRESS BULLYING PROMPTLY

Quickly address any incidents of bullying. Promptly intervening demonstrates a clear commitment to an inclusive and safe environment. Creating a culture where incidents are swiftly and effectively addressed reinforces trust, security, and a sense of belonging for everyone involved.

Meet Our Expert

Anna Bateman is Director of Halcyon Education Ltd and Director for Wellbeing and Family Services at Leigh Trust. With extensive experience in systemic mental health in schools, she supports educational leaders across the UK to develop inclusive, resilient, and supportive learning environments. Anna is also the lead expert for mental health at The National College.



The National College®

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: nationalcollege.com/guides/fostering-a-sense-of-belonging

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

ENCOURAGING HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS

Navigating the complexities of childhood and adolescent friendships can be challenging – but with the right guidance, children and young people can cultivate meaningful, supportive relationships, some of which may last for many years. These top tips provide a comprehensive approach to fostering healthy friendships among children and young people. It's important to remember, however, that each child is different, and will require an individual approach to relationship support.

1 GRANT FRIENDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Encouraging children and young people to join extracurricular activities can foster healthy friendships by providing shared interests and common ground. Engaging in these pastimes offers a platform for interaction, sometimes alleviating the social pressure of knowing what to say, and helps children develop meaningful connections.

2 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

The children and young people in our lives see how we behave, the connections that we've made and the interactions between us and others. When we model healthy friendships, we set an example and help youngsters to understand what healthy friendships looks like and how to navigate them.

3 HELP THEM LOVE THEMSELVES

Healthy friendships aren't just about dynamics with other people. They're about our relationship with ourselves. For overall wellbeing, it's important for a child to have the space to build their self-esteem and a positive self-image, as these factors can have a notable influence on the friendships they form throughout life.

4 MONITOR SCREEN TIME

Too much screen time can affect some children's wellbeing in general, but it can specifically impact friendships if it results in fewer positive social interactions. In some cases, reducing screen time and encouraging children and young people to find ways to interact face-to-face can have positive results. It's also important to remember that young people can make positive friendships online, but they will require support to do this safely.

5 TEACH PROBLEM-SOLVING

Inevitably, friendships can run into problems. However, this is also an opportunity to support children and young people to work through any difficulties that may arise. It can be tempting to intervene and try to fix these issues for those involved, but helping them consider ways of resolving conflict or managing difficult situations for themselves can help them create stronger friendships.

6 EMPOWER THE CHILD

When we give children and young people the confidence to choose their friends, navigate interpersonal boundaries and consider how they want to interact with the different people around them, we empower them to take control of the friendships they have. When young people feel in control of these things, they're more likely to make positive choices and remain aware of the signs of a negative relationship.

7 TEACH EMPATHY

'Healthy friendships' doesn't always mean 'perfect.' Sometimes, disagreements can happen. When we teach children and young people to have empathy, we help them to see both sides of a relationship; to be mindful of the challenges a friend might be facing or whatever else might be going on. This can help children and young people to build stronger friendships.

8 BE OPEN TO QUESTIONS

Talking to young people about their friendships, who they spend time with and who they interact with can open the door to questions if they have concerns. Initially, these queries may be straightforward, but if we are receptive to discussion from the outset, young people are more likely to come to us for help when they are older as well.

9 UNDERSTAND BOUNDARIES

One of the keys to a healthy friendship is honouring boundaries. This can include anything from respecting personal space and belongings to acceptable language and behaviour. Understanding the importance of setting these limits and upholding those set by others can help children stay safe. If young people figure out their boundaries and feel comfortable enforcing them, they're more likely to call someone out if they go too far.

10 SPOT THE SIGNS

We can't always supervise young people: sometimes, we need to step back and give them some space. However, it's important to consider any indicators that they may be struggling in their friendships. Are they becoming increasingly irritable? Does their behaviour alter when they've been with their friends? Are they becoming withdrawn or reluctant to take part in certain activities? These could all be signs that they're finding things difficult, and we should remain alert to such changes.

Meet Our Expert

Becky Dawson is an experienced educator who has worked in primary and secondary schools for 20 years. She is a facilitator, consultant and coach working with young people and the adults who work with them, with a focus on developing understanding and skills around mental health, wellbeing and safeguarding.



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The National College

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators DEVELOPING HEALTHY SLEEP PATTERNS

Quality sleep is paramount for wellbeing as it impacts our cognitive function, emotional balance and overall health. A World Health Organisation study highlighted that 44% of young people reported difficulty sleeping – potentially affecting their mood, concentration and immune system. Our guide offers expert tips for helping children to sleep more healthily.

1 MINDFUL TECH USE

Encourage a balanced approach to our technology. While phones, tablets, laptops and so on can serve as valuable means of stress relief, it is important to encourage their use right before bed. These devices can keep the mind racing long after they've switched off, impacting how easily and how well a person can sleep.

2 EFFECTIVE SLEEP PRACTICES

Offer practical advice on developing good habits that foster positive influences on evening routines. Children could start keeping a diary, which they add to each evening, for example: - at they could set up a reward system by extending during the day.

3 HYDRATION HABITS

Underline the importance of drinking plenty of water throughout the day, while forcing children down as bedtime to prevent disruptions during the night. It's a lot harder to wake up if you keep wanting to get out of bed for the toilet. Avoiding caffeinated drinks like the day also allows the body and brain to slow down naturally, without any stimulants firing them back up.

4 CONSISTENT BEDTIME SCHEDULE

Assist children in developing consistent bedtime routines that tell the body it's time to wind down, promoting a more relaxed state. Establish specific activities for young ones right before going to bed – such as brushing their teeth – to set up the association between that action and falling asleep.

5 OPTIMAL SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

Encourage that the bedroom is comfortable, dark and free from distractions, featuring an ideal space for quality rest. The room's temperature should not be too hot for sleeping – that's the key but not too cold – children should be kept as comfy and free of clutter as possible.

6 RELAXING EVENING ACTIVITIES

Encourage activities that have a calming effect on the mind – such as reading a gentle book or – to help them to fall asleep, to prepare the mind for a peaceful night's sleep. Doing something quiet, relaxing and low-stress signals to the brain that it's time to rest and makes falling asleep much easier.

7 PRIORITISING ADEQUATE SLEEP

Emphasise the crucial role of sleep in maintaining physical and emotional wellbeing. It is especially important to ensure a healthy sleep pattern during challenging and intensive periods in our lives. During the term, ensure for children and young people, to support.

8 NUTRITIONAL BALANCE

Highlight the significance of a healthy, balanced diet – not its role in establishing a sleep-conducive sleep pattern. It's a lot harder to prepare meals with plenty of fruit and vegetables, or even in some cases, to eat, naturally to live a healthier, but it also reduces the chances of feeling too full or uncomfortable to bed.

9 PARENTAL SUPPORT

Parents and carers, of course, are uniquely situated to support their children in establishing and maintaining healthy sleeping habits. Parents can reinforce their own sleep habits. Encourage them to stick to this but that they don't do anything to make a balanced bedtime routine and reinforce the importance of self-care.

10 MILITARY SLEEP METHOD

Look up 'the military sleep method'. It's a technique for falling asleep quickly, which incorporates deep breathing exercises. The goal is to encourage children to try it, as there are a number of ways it can help in good sleep of practice to get used, eventually it will start to feel natural – and the results are often extraordinary.

Meet Our Expert

Michelle Mead designed and defined the UK's only accredited postgraduate mental health qualifications. Winner of the Social Enterprise UK 'Genius Award' award, she currently provides training and support to education organisations and local authorities. This guide has been written by Adam Dicks – a learning and development specialist who is also Associate Vice-Principal for Personal Development at George Secondary School.



10 Top Tips on Supporting Children with SELF-REGULATION

Children need to learn to understand and recognise their emotions, while finding healthy ways to process them. Emotional self-regulation, however, depends heavily on age and development. While very young ones or children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) may find it particularly challenging to self-regulate, nurturing these important skills can be hugely beneficial. Here are ten top tips for supporting children with their self-regulation.

1. DESIGNATE A TRUSTED ADULT



It's vital that children feel safe and know that there's someone they can always go to for help if they need it. Schedule consistent times for the child to develop a relationship with this person – ideally through play and games – allowing trust to grow and ensuring that the child is more likely to come forward if anything is wrong, rather than hiding their emotions.

2. MEET CHILDREN HALFWAY

Unless you know where a child is developmentally and tailor your approach to their needs, you're less likely to have an impact. In particular, younger ones and children with SEND can struggle to self-regulate and instead rely on others to help them. We call this 'co-regulation'. Rather than offering strategies for self-regulation, it could be better to start co-regulating with a trusted adult first.

3. FACTOR IN THEIR BASIC NEEDS

Remember that for a child to develop emotional regulation skills, their basic needs must be met first. Children who are hungry, tired, cold and so on – as well as those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences – may struggle to self-regulate. Before you develop strategies with any child, make sure they feel safe, secure and comfortable in themselves.

4. REMAIN PATIENT

If a child is struggling with their emotions, it can often become difficult to stay calm. Remember that dysregulation is beyond their control, so a display of frustration or anger could negatively impact the situation. Instead, children need to be met with comfort and understanding to help them manage these problematic feelings.

5. BE 'A DYSREGULATION DETECTIVE'

While some children can tell you why they become dysregulated, many others can't. You could investigate potential triggers by observing the child and talking to their family. When the child becomes dysregulated, note down details like the time, what they're doing and who they're with – the trigger may be someone they sit near, an unmet sensory need or something else entirely. Once we identify some triggers, we can help to avoid or overcome them.

6. USE SUITABLE LITERATURE

There are some wonderful books that can help you teach self-regulation to children. Reading these with a child can be especially powerful. Take time to discuss the content: ask questions about what feelings the characters had, why they felt that way and what strategies helped them. It can also be useful to refer back to snippets of these books at appropriate moments.

7. TRY SENSORY RESOURCES

An overlap between sensory needs and emotional regulation is possible. Children may struggle to self-regulate if they're experiencing sensory overload (a noisy classroom, for example). Positive sensory input can help calm them down. Use resources such as weighted blankets and fibre-optic lights. Of course, what works for one child might not work for another – so it's important to offer a choice of resources to discover which they prefer.

8. NURTURE INDEPENDENCE

If you feel it's appropriate, let children try out these strategies alone. Always offer them a choice: they could listen to music when they're feeling stressed, for example, or they could write down their worries or draw something to represent how they feel. This may take time for the child to get used to, so be patient. Encourage them to share any helpful strategies with a trusted adult.

9. MODEL GENUINE FEELINGS

Children learn a lot just from watching grown-ups. Don't be afraid to show your own emotions and self-regulation strategies. While you'll obviously want to avoid sharing anything too personal with children, they should still see us experiencing and handling our own feelings. Tell them how you are feeling, then show them how to respond in a healthy manner.

10. FORMULATE A PLAN

As much as we try to prevent children from experiencing dysregulation, it's always wise to have an appropriate plan for when it does happen. Discuss this strategy with the child (if appropriate) and their family. The best approach for an individual child is often a bespoke one; it's hugely important to know in advance what might help and what could worsen the situation.

Meet Our Expert

Georgina Durrant is an author, former teacher, Special Educational Needs Coordinator and the founder of the award-winning SEN Resources Blog, where she shares activities, advice and recommendations for parents and teachers of children with SEND.



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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about WHATSAPP



WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service, with around two billion users exchanging texts, photos, videos and documents, as well as making voice and video calls. Its end-to-end encryption means messages can only be viewed by the sender and any recipients: not even WhatsApp can read them. Updates to its privacy policy in 2021 (involving sharing data with parent company Facebook) caused millions to leave the app, but the new policy was widely misinterpreted – it only related to WhatsApp's business features, not to personal messages.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SCAMS

Fraudsters occasionally send WhatsApp messages pretending to offer prizes – encouraging the user to click on a link to win. Other common scams involve warning someone that their WhatsApp subscription has run out (aiming to dupe them into disclosing payment details) or impersonating a friend or relative and asking for money to be transferred to help with an emergency.

DISAPPEARING MESSAGES

Users can set WhatsApp messages to disappear in 24 hours, 7 days or 90 days by default. Photos and videos can also be instructed to disappear after the recipient has viewed them. These files can't be saved or forwarded – so if your child was sent an inappropriate message, it would be difficult to prove any wrongdoing. However, the receiver can take a screenshot and save that as evidence.

ENABLING FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp has unfortunately been linked to accelerating the spread of dangerous rumours. In India in 2018, some outbreaks of mob violence appear to have been sparked by false allegations being shared on the app. WhatsApp itself took steps to prevent its users circulating hazardous theories and speculation in the early weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic.

POTENTIAL CYBERBULLYING

Group chat and video calls are great for connecting with multiple people in WhatsApp, but there is always the potential for someone's feelings to be hurt by an unkind comment or joke. The 'only admins' feature gives the admin(s) of a group control over who can send messages. They can, for example, block people from posting in a chat, which could make a child feel excluded and upset.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

To start a WhatsApp chat, you only need the mobile number of the person you want to message (the other person also needs to have the app). WhatsApp can access the address book on someone's device and recognise which of their contacts also use the app. So if your child has ever given their phone number to someone they don't know, that person could use it to contact them via WhatsApp.

LOCATION SHARING

The 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, allowing friends to see their movements. WhatsApp describes it as a "simple and secure way to let people know where you are." It is a useful method for a young person to let loved ones know they're safe – but if they used it in a chat with people they don't know, they would be exposing their location to them, too.

Advice for Parents & Carers

CLICK HERE

CREATE A SAFE PROFILE

Even though someone would need a child's phone number to add them as a contact, it's also worth altering a young person's profile settings to restrict who can see their photo and status. The options are 'everyone', 'my contacts' and 'nobody' – choosing one of the latter two ensures that your child's profile is better protected.



EXPLAIN ABOUT BLOCKING

If your child receives spam or offensive messages, calls or files from a contact, they should block them using 'settings' in the chat. Communication from a blocked contact won't show up on their device and stays undelivered. Blocking someone does not remove them from your child's contact list – so they also need to be deleted from the address book.

REPORT POTENTIAL SCAMS

Young people shouldn't engage with any message that looks suspicious or too good to be true. When your child receives a message from an unknown number for the first time, they'll be given the option to report it as spam. If the sender claims to be a friend or relative, call that person on their usual number to verify it really is them, or if it's someone trying to trick your child.

LEAVE A GROUP

If your child is in a group chat that is making them feel uncomfortable, or has been added to a group that they don't want to be part of, they can use WhatsApp's group settings to leave. If someone exits a group, the admin can add them back in once; if they leave a second time, it is permanent.



THINK ABOUT LOCATION

If your child needs to use the 'live location' function to show you or one of their friends where they are, advise them to share their location only for as long as they need to. WhatsApp gives a range of 'live location' options, and your child should manually stop sharing their position as soon as it is no longer needed.



DELETE ACCIDENTAL MESSAGES

If your child posts a message they want to delete, WhatsApp allows the user seven minutes to erase a message. Tap and hold on the message, choose 'delete' and then 'delete for everyone'. However, it's important to remember that recipients may have seen (and taken a screenshot of) a message before it was deleted.



CHECK THE FACTS

You can now fact-check WhatsApp messages that have been forwarded at least five times, by double-tapping the magnifying glass icon to the right of the message. From there, your child can launch a Google search and decide for themselves whether the message was true or not.



Meet Our Expert

Parveen Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Click: a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.



National Online Safety

#WakeUpWednesday

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

ENCOURAGING OPEN CONVERSATIONS AT HOME

With tricky topics and occasional clashes of opinion, it can be challenging to maintain an environment where children feel able to talk candidly and honestly. However, encouraging such conversations helps to develop trust – making it easier to unpack even sensitive subjects as children get older. Here are our top tips for promoting open conversations at home.

1 CREATE A SAFE SPACE



Criticism, blaming or shaming can all prevent children from feeling emotionally safe – while showing affection, positive attention and an interest in what a child has to say builds their sense of security. These formative years are when children's opinions and values begin to take shape, so it's important to provide a non-judgmental environment in which to discuss them – especially if their opinions differ from your own.

2 CONSIDER OTHER OUTLETS



Some children may find it easier to talk while they're participating in another activity such as drawing, writing, walking or sport. If it's possible, taking part in these activities together presents you with an opportunity to communicate while doing something side by side. A child may feel less pressure that way and can be more inclined to open up of their own accord.

3 NORMALISE CHATS ABOUT FEELINGS



Incorporate mental health and emotional wellbeing into everyday conversations, using age-appropriate language and examples to help children understand their emotions. Ask questions like "How are you feeling today?", "What was the best and worst part of your day?", "If you could start today again, what would you do differently?" and "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

4 LISTEN ACTIVELY



When children express themselves, make it obvious that you're listening closely and giving them your full attention. Maintain eye contact and validate their feelings without immediately trying to solve the problem. It's not helpful to dismiss their issues as childish or 'teenage angst' – or to assume that they'll simply 'get over' whatever they're feeling. Children don't have your life experience; their resilience is still developing as they learn to push through difficulties and handle problems.

5 ASK OPEN QUESTIONS



Encourage children to share their thoughts by asking open questions about their feelings and experiences. Closed questions (such as "Did you enjoy school today?") are more likely to elicit a simple "yes" or "no" response. Instead, you could ask things like "Who did you spend time with at break?" or "Who did you sit with at lunchtime?"

6 RESPECT THEIR BOUNDARIES



If a child isn't ready to talk to about something yet, respect their boundaries: this reinforces that their feelings are important and worthy of consideration. Ideally, you're aiming to let them know you care without smothering them, so just make it clear that you're there for them whenever they're ready to chat. Gentle, regular check-ins can sometimes be the best form of progress.

7 LEAD BY EXAMPLE



Model open, honest and healthy communication in front of children and young people. Try to demonstrate kindness when talking about others and yourself, because if children hear adults being overly harsh, critical or judgmental, or see them having unrealistic expectations of themselves, it makes them more likely to adopt and repeat this behaviour themselves as they grow.

8 HAVE REGULAR CHECK-INS



Check in with children periodically to discuss how they're feeling and what's going on in their lives. This could be a weekly or monthly conversation, where the child has an opportunity to share whatever's on their mind. For parents and carers, getting away from the house and other distractions might be productive here: you could consider regular trips to a coffee shop or a cafe, or just a weekly walk.

9 PROVIDE RESOURCES



It's often beneficial to let children know about other support that's available to them if they're struggling to talk to you specifically. Encourage them to talk to school counsellors, trusted adults or even a therapist, if necessary – while normalising this route and dispelling the harmful stigma around asking for help. Older children could engage with resources such as Kooth or YoungMinds.

10 CELEBRATE EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION



It's beneficial to praise children for expressing their feelings honestly – emphasising how important it is to talk about their emotions and how proud you are of them for doing so. This can be especially pivotal for boys, who often experience more of a stigma around talking frankly about their feelings and their mental health – a barrier that can be overcome, with enough love and support.

Meet Our Expert

With 30 years' experience as a teacher, trainer, consultant and interim executive board member, Anna Bateman has a superb understanding of what works in pedagogy, school improvement and leadership. She has also advised the Department for Education on their mental health green paper.



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