



RMGS Safeguarding Bulletin 2025/26 Term 3

Once a term we will share the RMGS safeguarding bulletin with all members of our school community, to refresh our knowledge and understanding of key safeguarding information that reflects the needs of the RMGS community. It is our aim to keep students, parents and staff up to date with the information they need to support the school community.

Main Contact Points

General Enquiries

rmgs-office@rmet.org

Safeguarding Concerns

rmgssafeguarding@rmet.org

Website

<https://www.rainhammark.com/>

Take a moment to refresh your knowledge on how RMGS keeps you safe. Please click the link: [How RMGS Keeps You Safe](#)

National Online Safety App

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.nationaleducationgroup.nos>

Alternatively, search for 'National Online Safety' in the App Store/Google Play Store

Report a Safeguarding Concern

If you have a safeguarding concern and you have not been able to speak to a member of staff whilst at school, please report your concern online using our button located on the school website [here](#) and a member of the safeguarding team will contact you.

Or please click on the link below or scan the QR code

[Report a Concern](#)



For our older students

As the world of parties and pubs approaches for our young people, parents and students alike might find these sources of information useful:

- **Information on spiking and how to stay safe -**
<https://www.changegrowlive.org/young-people/spiking>
- Spiking is giving someone alcohol or drugs without their consent.



- Spiking can be a scary and upsetting experience, but it isn't something to feel guilty or ashamed about. Spiking is illegal and it is never the fault of the person who has been spiked.
- This page will give you advice on how to avoid being spiked, how to tell if someone has been spiked, and what to do in an emergency.

- **Information on alcohol and drugs**
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/drugs-and-alcohol/>

It's normal for teenagers and young adults to experiment, test boundaries and take some risks. Drinking alcohol and trying drugs is one of the ways in which some young people do this. It is common for teenagers to drink alcohol at some point. A smaller number of young people will try illegal drugs, or smoke cigarettes or e-cigarettes (often called 'vaping').

A teenager or young adult might drink alcohol or take drugs for different reasons. They might do it because:

- it makes them feel good in the moment
- it's a way of having fun or socialising
- they are curious and want to test boundaries or try new things
- they want to fit in with a social group or feel pressure to do it
- it makes them feel more confident
- they want to distract from difficult thoughts or feelings

As a parent or carer, it's important to talk to your child or young person about drugs and alcohol. By doing this, you can help them to understand the risks and support them to make safe and healthy choices. In this guide, you'll find lots of tips to help you. You'll also find information about where you can get help if you're worried about your child's alcohol or drug use.



- **Keeping safe and healthy**

<https://www.rainhammark.com/page/?title=Guidance+on+how+to+keep+safe&pid=260> and

<https://www.rainhammark.com/page/?title=Mental+Health+and+Wellbeing&pid=257>

Safer Internet Day – Tuesday 10th February

It was *Safer Internet Day* on 10th February when, in addition to the work they do in PSHE, students explored the 4Cs of online safety (Content, Contact, Conduct, Commerce) and learned strategies to stay safe, recognise risks, and make responsible choices in a digital world.

To support you at home, we recommend the UK Safer Internet Centre website, <http://saferinternet.org.uk>, which offers clear advice for parents and carers on supporting young people online. Their guidance includes tips on setting parental controls, managing screen time, and helping children navigate the digital world safely. You can access their information for parents and carers through the Top Tips for Parents and Carers section on their Safer Internet Day 2026 page.

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/safer-internet-day-2026>



How to Manage school group chats? A guide for parents -

With children starting back at school, lots of parents will have found themselves under pressure to provide a smartphone, or let their child get the messaging apps they say all their friends are using.

BBC Bitesize Parents' Toolkit has spoken to parents and an expert about negotiating the tricky world of the school group chat.

The smartphone dilemma



“My son said all his friends were getting a phone to start Year 7,” says Dan Bruce, whose son is 11. “We agreed to the phone, partly because our older daughter got her first phone at the same age. It seems sensible that he can contact us, but we’re also concerned because we’ve already been through the trauma of having a young teenager with a smart phone. Now he wants WhatsApp, because he says his friends are on it, but I thought you had to be 16 to use it.”

The required age to use WhatsApp has been lowered from 16 to 13, but many younger children do use it, as well as other messaging apps like Snapchat, Discord - that’s often used for gaming chats - or even Roblox.

[Five things to consider when buying your child their first mobile phone](#)

Unkind messaging



One of Dan's concerns is about conflict on messaging apps. "Our daughter and her friends had some problems in the first few years of senior school with people being mean on messaging apps. Big dramas would blow up online and we had no idea all this was happening till it had really upset her or her friends. In her year group, there have been times when a group chat out of school turns nasty and then people are upset at school and the staff have to get involved."

Heather Milton-Brooks's son is in Year 6 and has asked for a smartphone, though she is holding off. "My concern with messaging apps like WhatsApp and Snapchat is getting involved in conversations that might not be appropriate and not being mature enough to realise that going along with what someone else is saying is almost as bad as saying it yourself. People can also be left out of groups or targeted with horrible messages," she says.

You have to have conversations about the conversations taking place." - Catherine Knibbs

Catherine Knibbs is a Human Behaviour Technologist and Ethicist as well as a Child & Adult Psychotherapist. She says these issues are things she sees in her work all the time. "The Internet is unforgiving so it's difficult to make mistakes. Young people are learning to navigate new social norms in a world that's constantly changing and they don't necessarily have the skills to do that."

"Every single issue I've dealt with in therapy is where the parent and child's communication is broken. So, for me, the solution to all these technology issues is conversations, conversations, conversations.

"You have to discuss with your child what they're doing. They have to feel free to discuss it with you. And you have to have conversations about the conversations taking place."

Snapchat versus Whatsapp

Most parents will be familiar with how to use WhatsApp as it's used so much for work, neighbourhood groups and school parents' groups. The teens we spoke to tended to use WhatsApp for more formal communication – groups for class homework discussions, or work chats related to their part-time jobs, and for talking to parents and relatives. They preferred Snapchat for talking to their friends and their social group chats were on Snapchat too.

Catherine explains, "Most parents probably don't fully understand the new technologies young people are using, so we have to join our children in these spaces and learn alongside them. I always advise parents, 'Join your children in their playground'. If you understand how their technology works and what they use it for – whether that's a game or a messaging app – there's less likely to be conflict."

There's a really comprehensive guide to lots of messaging apps on the [Internet Matters website](#), which includes WhatsApp and Snapchat.

Being left out of chats

Whether they're using Snapchat or WhatsApp, Catherine explains that the way children use group chats is often about peer hierarchies. "It's about inclusion and exclusion. We used to worry that people might be talking about us behind our backs – that's always happened. But now if someone says something that isn't liked on a group chat, they can be kicked from the group and the app will tell them they're kicked out, and then a new group might be created, and kids tend to call that something horrible like 'We hate Lucy'. Someone can then screenshot that chat and send it to Lucy."

"The same behaviours happen in the real world, in the playground, but now there's a digital record of it, and so often teachers or other parents see these and get involved and things can escalate."



Talk about what's happening, not just about the technology." - Child & Adult Psychotherapist Catherine Knibbs

"The temptation is for parents to advise the child to ignore the behaviour, and just to join another group, or turn off the phone, but that's ignoring the emotional impact. This is where the parental conversations are so important. Being able to deal with rejection like this comes from self-esteem, and that comes from knowing that you're important to someone. So parents can say, 'Yeah, it's really horrible when somebody calls you names,' and describe similar instances from their childhood – being careful not to make it a competition, of course! Talk about what's happening, not just about the technology."

"And if it's your child doing the excluding, the same applies. If you saw your child kicking another child in the park you'd call them out on it. You'd discuss why we don't do that, and in the cyber world it's no different. If you're regularly having the conversations, it's easier to parent these online conflicts."

Parents' WhatsApp groups

Plenty of parents have told us they simply don't join school WhatsApp groups any more – they're too stressful.

Catherine says, "Some of these parents' groups can feel like being thrown into a pit of vipers at times and that's because they are enforced systems of communication - you're being interrupted when you don't want to be, and nobody sets the rules. I was invited to join one the other week and I said I'm going to decline, because I prefer to talk to my friends face to face."

It may be worth joining one WhatsApp group, just to understand the kinds of frustrations your child might be facing in their own groups. One thing that's worth learning together is how to [turn off notifications](#), so you only catch up on the chat when you have time, and aren't constantly interrupted. You can also [archive a group](#) so you only visit it when you really want to.



This also makes it much less likely that you'll accidentally reply to the wrong group. Usually, a person's contact name flashes up just as you stored it in your phone, even if they posted to a group, which makes it easy to mistake a public message for a personal one and reply in the wrong tone.

For both parents and teenagers, therefore, when posting a message it pays to behave in all online groups as you would in any real world social situation.

BBC News reported on one such scenario where [things went beyond the group chat](#).

Catherine says, "We have to think about what's going on human to human. Technology can facilitate this but, without blaming parents, we have to really start having true conversations with our children face to face. If they can do this in the real world, they'll fare much better online."

Further resources:

The [Internet Matters website](#) provides information and advice to parents and carers to help their children navigate the ever-changing digital landscape.

[Encouraging kids to show kind behaviour online](#)

[How to set up your child's devices safely](#)

Social Media platforms guide

Stay informed about the latest social media platforms children are using and learn how to help them navigate these spaces safely.

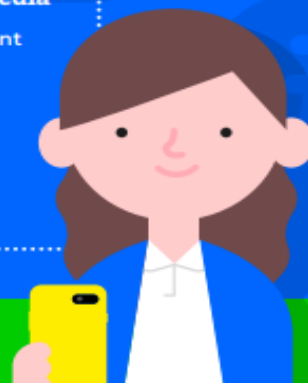
Discover key features to stay in control of what they see and share, empowering them to use social media responsibly.



Child Safety Online:

Why children use social media

- Entertainment
- Belonging
- Confidence
- Popularity
- Self-esteem
- Expression



A practical guide for parents and carers whose children are using social media

Social networking is hugely popular. Many young people are sophisticated in the way they use social media apps and websites, tailoring their communication for different audiences, and accessing them from a range of devices including smartphones, tablets, and games consoles.

But social media, like all forms of public communication, comes with some risks. Not all of these risks turn into actual problems; and if children never face any risks, they never learn how to deal with them. By helping your child understand what the risks are, you can play a big part in preventing them from turning into problems.

Understand the risks children may need to deal with

What they could see or do:

- Seeing or sharing of violent, sexual and pornographic content
- Inaccurate or false information and extreme views
- Promotion of harmful behaviours including self-harm, anorexia and suicide
- Over-sharing of personal information
- Actively or unintentionally getting involved in bullying or hurtful behaviour

Who they might meet:

- People who might bully, intimidate or frighten
- People posing behind fake profiles for:
 - Mischief-making
 - Sexual grooming and stalking
 - Blackmail and extortion
 - Identity theft and hacking

How this could affect them

- Fear of missing out leading to excessive use or exaggeration
- Getting upset by things they have seen and being uncertain about what to do
- Engaging, or being pressured into engaging in more risky behaviour either by accident or by design
- Developing unrealistic, and perhaps depressing ideals of body image and gender
- Becoming subject to peer pressure or interactions that are intense or too difficult to handle
- Creating an online reputation that may create problems for them in the future



Practical tips to help minimise the risks your child might face

It's good practice for apps and websites to have safety advice and well-designed safety features which can make a real difference to how safe your child will be when using them.

Work through safety and privacy features on the apps that your child is using, or might use. Make sure they understand the point of these and how to use them. Don't be put off by believing your child knows more than you: the tools are actually quite easy to manage.

- **Ask them to show you** which social media apps they use and what they like about them. Talk about how they use them and what makes them so engaging.
- **Explain how you can use privacy settings** to make sure only approved friends can see posts & images.
- **Check if any of their apps have 'geo-location' enabled**, sharing their location unintentionally.
- **Show them how to report offensive comments** or block people who upset them.
- **Check 'tagging' settings** so that when others are posting or sharing photos online, your child's identity is not revealed. Also, get people's consent before sharing photos.
- Encourage your child to **come and talk to you** if they see anything that upsets them.

Keep talking and stay involved

In a mobile age, children can't be completely protected, even by the best privacy controls; another child may use different settings. So it's important to keep talking to your child about the implications of social media.

Getting a sense of what they think is a useful place to start; you may be surprised by how much thought they may have given to the issues. Encourage your child to think carefully about the way they, and others behave online, and how they might deal with difficult situations.

- People may **not always be who they say they are online**: how can this create problems?
- Why is it **unwise to meet** anyone in the real world that you've only ever met online?
- Even if you think your messages are private, remember that words and images can always be **captured and broadcast**.
- People **present themselves differently online** - do they really look like that? Are they always having that good a time?
- Be aware that screens, and especially being anonymous, can lead people to say things they **wouldn't say to someone's face**.
- What does **being a good friend and a likeable person** online look like?
- There can be **pressure to be part of a particular group** online or to be seen to be **following a certain set of ideas**. How can you take a step back and make your own decisions?

For more information

You can find out more about how children use social media, the apps they use, the risks they face, how to use privacy settings, and advice and tips about how to talk to your children at:

www.childnet.com/sns
www.internetmatters.org
www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety
www.parentzone.org.uk
www.thinkyouknow.co.uk/parents
www.askaboutgames.com

To make a report

Concerned about online grooming or sexual behaviour online? Contact CEOP: www.ceop.police.uk

If you stumble across criminal sexual or obscene content on the internet you should report it to the Internet Watch Foundation: www.iwf.org.uk



Age Restrictions for Social Media Platforms

What is the minimum age for account holders on these social media sites and apps?

Under 13



13+



16+



17+



Sourced from NSPCC website October 2019

Have a conversation

It is really important to chat with your children on an ongoing basis about staying safe online. Not sure where to begin? These conversation starter suggestions can help.

■ Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.

What games do you and your friends like to play online? Can you show me the websites you visit the most? Shall we play your favourite game online together?

▲ Ask them about how they stay safe online.

What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?

● Ask them if they know where to go for help.

Where can they go to find the safety advice, privacy settings and how to report or block on the services they use?

◆ Think about how you each use the internet.

What more could you do to use the internet together? Are there activities that you could enjoy as a family?

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>



What is 'affluent neglect'?

Affluent neglect refers to the neglect experienced by children in wealthy families. Often, neglect in wealthier families can be more difficult to spot, as the type of neglect experienced by children and young people in these circumstances is often emotional.

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E-scooters – are you breaking the law?



Can I ride my e-scooter to school or work?

No, it's Illegal...

E-scooters are classed as motor vehicles and are required to be taxed and insured. It's not possible to get insurance for privately owned e-scooters, which means it's illegal to use them.

Can I ride my e-scooter on the pavement?

No, it's Illegal...

You cannot use e-scooters on public footpaths, cycle lanes or roads.

What happens if I'm caught using my e-scooter in public spaces?

The scooter may be seized and as a result, destroyed.

If stopped by an officer, you may be asked to complete a breath and drugs test. You also risk a £300 fine and six penalty points on your licence for no insurance.



**Kent
Police**

Think before you buy:

The number of electrical scooters being used on our streets has risen, as well as reports of serious injury and fatalities.

For more information and advice on the use of e-scooters visit www.kent.police.uk/road-safety



Do you need to talk?

FAMILY

Are you concerned about anything happening in your family?

FRIENDSHIPS

Are you concerned about one of your friends?

WORRIES

Is anything worrying you at school or outside school?

BULLYING

Are you concerned about the way someone is treating you?

Rainham Mark Grammar School Designated Safeguarding Leads



Mrs Horstrup (DSL)
Designated Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Hart
Deputy DSL



Mr Smith
Deputy DSL



Mr Brown
Deputy DSL



Ms Gooding
Deputy DSL



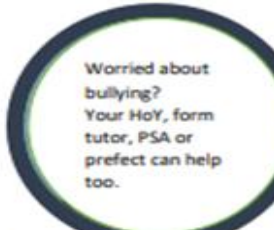
Mrs Robbins Deputy DSL



Mrs Curtis Deputy DSL



Mrs Buckland Deputy DSL



Worried about bullying?
Your HoY, form tutor, PSA or prefect can help too.

To report a concern online please visit the school website