

Safer Newsletter

Our Safeguarding Team

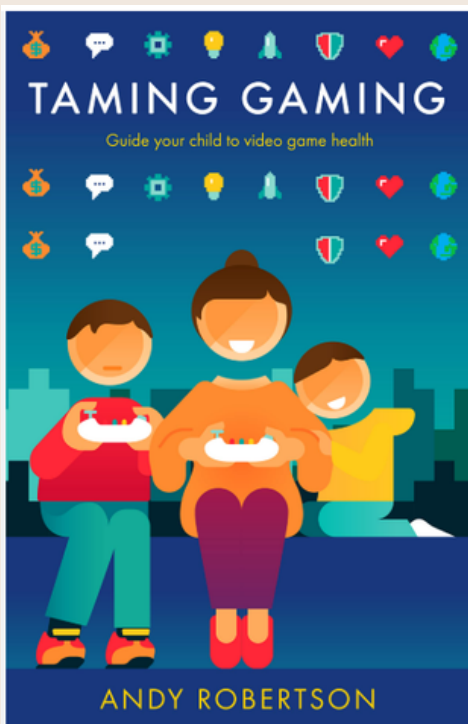
Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility at Peters Hill but we have staff with designated responsibilities for Safeguarding. We have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a group of deputies. We also have a dedicated Safeguarding Officer.

Meet the team below.

If you have any concerns you can contact any of the Safeguarding Team who will deal with your concern promptly, confidentially and without judgement.

Meet our Safeguarding Team

Tracy Curnin DSL	Simon Duncan Deputy DSL	Hayley Owen Deputy DSL	Ellen Foxall Deputy DSL	Stephen Porter Deputy DSL	Karen Bridgwater Safeguarding Officer
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Taming Gaming is a database to help parents navigate the gaming world. There are nearly 4000 games in the database and all have been researched and tested by real families.

It was inspired from the book of the same name by Andy Robertson.

You can get updates as new games are released and by clicking on the picture of the game you want to learn more about, you can get in a simple and easy to understand format; the cost, reviews, age recommendations and potential risks.

<https://www.familygamingdatabase.com/en-gb/home>



NCDV's mission is helping people identify early signs of domestic abuse, in order to make decisions for a better life and make domestic abuse socially unacceptable.

NCDV was established in 2003 in order to help survivors of domestic violence to gain protection against an abuser, as well as offering services to probation service, police, domestic abuse agency works, the legal profession and judiciary.

For more information on how they can support you, follow the link below:

<https://www.ncdv.org.uk/>

Chatbots

Chatbots are the most common form of AI used by the everyday person, including children. Google Gemini, **Character AI** and ChatGPT all use a conversational form of artificial intelligence.

Humans programmed chatbots in this way so that it feels like you're talking to a real person. As such, you might be more willing to engage with it.

Chatbots tend to respond based on what it supposes the user wants the response to be and will value keeping a user engaged over offering factual or accurate responses.

Children with additional needs can be more susceptible to over reliance on Chatbots.

Often responses from a chatbot will always be positive, never challenge or say no and more worryingly, won't always give responses that are inline with UK laws and safeguarding.

Are Chatbots safe for children?

Most AI tools are not designed for children, which can leave them vulnerable to harm.

Popular chatbots like **ChatGPT**, **Google Gemini** and **Microsoft Copilot** all require users to be 13 or older.

However, not all teenagers have the right skills to use these platforms, so keep that in mind when thinking about allowing access.

Additionally, many of the app versions of chatbots are available in device app stores. This can help guide whether apps are appropriate for your child. However, some app store age guidance might not reflect the minimums that platforms require. So, checking both is best.

None of these chatbots have parental controls within the platforms. The only settings often relate to privacy. Review these settings to make sure the AI is not learning from your child's questions or responses.

If you want to limit access to these tools, you can use external parental control tools like **Google Family Link** or **Apple Screen Time**. With both of these, you can block access to AI websites or apps, or you can set time limits for each app.

More information can be found on the following link;

<https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/by-activity/using-artificial-intelligence/what-is-ai-artificial-intelligence/>

Wake Up Wednesdays

The Online College produce weekly posters on all aspects of online safety, these are free for parents.

Sign up on www.nationalcollege.com

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child, you can contact Children's Services directly via the information below;

Children's Front Door

Telephone: [0300 555 0050](tel:03005550050) (select option 3)
Opening hours: 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Emergency Duty Team

Telephone: [0300 555 8574](tel:03005558574) (Out of office)
Open 5pm to 9am, Monday to Friday, 24 hours at weekends and on bank holidays

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about GENERATIVE AI SAFETY

Generative AI tools – such as ChatGPT – are now commonly used by children. In fact, 3 in 4 pupils in the 2024 Annual Literacy Survey reported using generative AI, up from just 2 in 5 the previous year. While these tools can boost learning and creativity, they also raise concerns around misinformation, privacy and overuse. This guide explores the key risks and how to support safe use.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

MISINFORMATION AND ACCURACY



Generative AI can sometimes produce false or misleading content. Children – and even adults – may assume the information is accurate and trustworthy. This can affect learning and understanding of important topics. It's vital to teach children to critically assess all information, even when it comes from AI.

EXPOSURE TO INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Because generative AI is trained on vast datasets from across the internet, there is a chance it may occasionally generate harmful or inappropriate content. Without supervision, children could encounter disturbing or unsuitable material. Active monitoring and clear usage boundaries can help reduce this risk.

PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY

Some AI tools ask for personal details or store users' interactions. If privacy settings are not correctly configured, children's personal data could be exposed or misused. Teaching good digital hygiene and setting strong privacy controls is essential for protecting children online.

REDUCED CRITICAL THINKING



Relying too heavily on AI-generated responses may reduce children's willingness to think independently. If they consistently use AI to solve problems or complete tasks, it could impact their ability to reason, analyse and form their own ideas. Encouraging thoughtful reflection is key.

DIGITAL DEPENDENCY



Regular use of generative AI can contribute to increased screen time and less real-world interaction. If left unmanaged, it may affect physical activity levels, sleep, and social development. Striking a healthy balance between online and offline activities is important for wellbeing.

UNCLEAR ETHICAL BOUNDARIES



Children may not fully understand the ethical implications of using AI to complete homework or creative tasks. This can lead to unintentional plagiarism or dishonest academic practices. Conversations around responsible use and academic honesty are crucial.

Advice for Parents & Educators

ESTABLISH CLEAR GUIDELINES

Set clear, age-appropriate rules for when and how generative AI can be used. Reinforce these regularly to help children develop a healthy, respectful and informed relationship with the technology.



ENCOURAGE CRITICAL EVALUATION

Help children to question the accuracy of AI-generated information and seek out additional trusted sources. This builds essential digital literacy skills and supports better decision-making.



PROMOTE ACTIVE SUPERVISION

Keep an eye on how the children in your care use AI tools. Check in regularly to ensure they're using them appropriately and be ready to step in if something doesn't feel right.



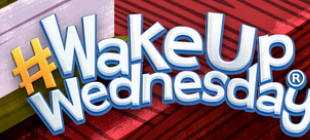
ENHANCE PRIVACY AWARENESS

Talk to children about the importance of keeping personal information private. Make sure privacy settings are in place and explain how data shared with AI tools could be used.



Meet Our Expert

Brendan O'Keeffe, Deputy Headmaster and Director of Digital Strategy at Eaton House Schools, has extensive expertise in digital safety, safeguarding, and generative AI in education. As an author and speaker on digital literacy and online safety for institutions such as The National College, Brendan guides parents and educators in creating safe digital learning environments.



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Every Wednesday the National College release a 'Wake Up Wednesday' parent guide.

Sign up via X, Facebook, Instagram or Tik Tok to get these each week.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI VIRTUAL FRIENDS

Artificial intelligence has seen significant development over the recent months, with companies releasing new AI-based software or adding an AI element to existing apps (such as Snapchat). One form of AI that has become especially popular has been the 'AI friend' or chatbot. There are now numerous 'virtual friend' apps available, with other successful platforms likely to adopt it soon.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AI chatbots may not always recognise when content is age inappropriate or harmful and should be filtered out. As a result, there's a possibility that children could be exposed to offensive language or explicit material while conversing with their virtual friend. The companies producing such AI solutions are also unlikely to take responsibility for any content that their algorithms generate.

REDUCED SOCIAL CONTACT

An excessive reliance on chatbots for social interaction could potentially cause a child to begin reducing the amount of face-to-face communication they have, leading to social isolation. If young people become dependent on chatbots to provide companionship, it could possibly hinder the development of their real-life social skills.

LACK OF SENSITIVITY

Chatbot software isn't always sophisticated enough to pick up on subtle emotional cues or recognise signs of distress in children, as most humans would. It might therefore fail to respond appropriately. AI misinterpreting what it's being told or replying insensitively to a young user who's already struggling could potentially impact a child's emotional wellbeing or exacerbate any existing emotional issues.

UNINTENTIONAL BIAS

AI companions are only as reliable as the information they've been programmed with. The algorithms they use, therefore, may unintentionally promote bias, stereotypes or discriminatory behaviour. As many chatbots originate from the USA or UK, for instance, they can display a distinctly western-centric worldview. This could lead to children developing skewed attitudes and behaviours if they interact with the AI consistently.

COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS

Although many are now undeniably advanced, AI-powered chatbots still have limitations in terms of understanding complex concepts, context and nuance. Depending heavily on chatbots to help with learning or solving problems may stunt the development of a child's own powers of critical thinking, their creativity and their ability to engage in open-ended discussions with other people.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Chatbots typically collect data about users, including personal information and conversations. This is ostensibly to improve their performance as they gradually learn about our behaviour – but many experts warn that there may be significant risks associated with how this information is stored and used (for instance, the possibility of potential breaches or misuse by third parties).

Advice for Parents & Carers

CHAT ABOUT CHATBOTS

If a child is already expressing an interest in AI apps, then a relaxed, natural chat should help you to discover which ones they're aware of and how they're using them (or are planning to). Discuss these options with children and perhaps do your own research to ensure that you think they're suitable. Once you're totally happy, you could sit and explore the range of AI chatbots together.

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

If a child is keen to engage with AI chatbots, encourage them to do so in a safe environment: ideally in a shared space, so you can easily keep an eye and ear on their progress. Set up appropriate content filtering measures in advance – and gently remind them that you'll be close by and ready to help with any questions or concerns that may arise.

FIND A BALANCE

Work alongside children to establish the right balance in terms of how they might use AI-powered chatbots – and when it's appropriate. It's important to make sure that children still get plenty of opportunities to learn to solve problems for themselves, as well as building their interpersonal skills through face-to-face conversations with friends, family members and teachers.

TAKE CONTROL

As with any form of app or game, when it comes to AI chatbots we'd strongly recommend that you consider employing parental controls (either on the device being used or within the software itself) to manage which apps children can download and interact with. This is particularly important for younger children, who may be more at risk of being upset or frightened by inappropriate content.

RECOGNISE THE RISKS

It's unlikely that most children will have even considered the potential risks attached to having a virtual companion. So it's probably wise to explain some of the possible hazards and challenges of AI chatbots to them. Emphasise that AI isn't a real person (however much it might sound like one) and may occasionally tell them something inaccurate or skewed by bias.

Meet Our Expert

A Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), Gary Henderson is the Director of IT at a large boarding school in the UK, having previously taught in schools and colleges in Britain and the Middle East. With a particular interest in digital citizenship and cyber security, he believes it is essential that we become more aware of the risks around technology, as well as the benefits.



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