



Safeguarding Newsletter

Issue 11 – 21.6.24

Nothing is more important to us than the safety and welfare of our pupils.

We are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of our children and young people within our school. We work closely with families and a range of professional external agencies to secure this and follow Dudley Safeguarding policies and procedures within our school.

We hope you find this Safeguarding Newsletter useful and aim to send at least one each half term.

Screen time findings

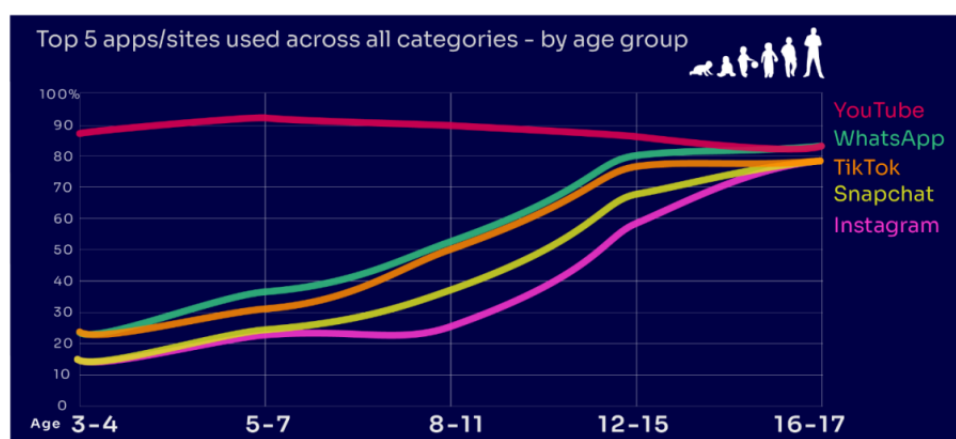
Last month, the Education Committee produced a report about the impact of screen time on children's education and well-being.

There has been a 52% increase in children's screen time between 2020 and 2022 and nearly 35% of children use their smartphones in a way that is consistent with a behavioural addiction.

Screen time has been found to start as early as six months old and one in 5 children aged between 3-4 have their own mobile phone. Almost all children have their own phone by the age of 12. The committee concludes that screen time should be minimal for younger children, replaced with face-to-face socialisation and physical activity for older children.

"Our report found that it is clear that children require face to face and in person social contact in order to thrive. Screen time is inversely associated with working memory, processing, attention levels, language skills and executive function. Whilst there can be some benefits from the online world, ready, unsupervised and unrestricted access to the internet leaves children vulnerable, exposing them to worlds they are not equipped for."

Have a look at the parents' guide for managing screen time and see if any of the tips are helpful for you and your family:



OFCOM – Media use and attitudes survey 2024

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Support for the Summer Holidays

If you need support over the summer holidays, school can refer to a number of organisations to help.

Kids Clothes Project can provide you with good quality clothes for children between 2 – 12 years old, equally, they accept donations. Check their website for drop off points; <https://www.kidsclothesproject.co.uk/> School can refer if you would this useful, please contact Karen Bridgwater our Safeguarding Officer for more information.

Food Bank Vouchers can be provided to families in need, please contact Karen Bridgwater for more information. Please note we can not refer during school holidays. In holiday time please refer to the Family Hubs for support.

Stourbridge - Forge Rd, Stourbridge, DY8 1XF, 01384 818780

Dudley offer **free holiday activities** to eligible children aged between 5 – 16. Check the website to see if you would be eligible; <https://www.dudleyholidayactivities.org.uk/>

Dudley play week - <https://dudleyci.co.uk/whats-on> have lots of activities happening over summer in Dudley from Duck races to author visits in local libraries, family fun days and lots more.

Park run - Junior Park Run is a free, fun and friendly weekly 2km event for 4 – 14 year olds. Every Sunday at Stevens Park DY9 7JG. You can walk run or volunteer.

My child is gaming with strangers – what should I do?

This is part of a series of blogs written by the Education Team at [Childnet](#), one of the partners in the UK Safer Internet Centre.

What games allow chat?

Online chats are currently a big part of the gaming world. Through work in schools, we know many young people chat to others while they are playing games. Online chats in games can take various forms, including:



- Written chats – these could be direct messages to specific people, group chats with friends or a public chat.
- Voice chat – talking aloud with other people, often using a headset to do so.
- Video chat – talking with other people through a video, where a person and their surroundings can be seen.

Chat can often be a feature built into the game; however, some gamers use separate apps to chat whilst gaming, including some apps which can be integrated directly into the gaming experience.

Is chatting in games dangerous?

Chatting in online games can be a positive experience for young people and is a quick and easy way for them to communicate with gamers from all over the world. Online game chats give young people the opportunity to work in teams and enjoy the game together, creating a positive social environment. Online chats can also be an important part of online gaming, as it is a way to communicate with teammates and successfully complete tasks and levels.

However, there are some risks to be aware of when young people are chatting in games. They may witness bad language or online hate if this is not blocked or filtered by the game. In a voice chat, this behaviour can be harder to monitor, especially if it's through a headset as there is no written record of what has been said.

Another risk could be somebody asking to move the chat onto another messaging app or social media platform. These chats, separate from the game, could be encrypted and



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harder to moderate. It can sometimes be the case that a child may 'befriend' somebody online and begin to trust them. This may lead them to share personal information, photos, and videos, or agree to meet up with them.

What advice can I share with my child?

It is important to remember that all children are different, and as their parent or carer you are best placed to know what your children are ready for in the online world. However, conversation is key when you're trying to understand the purpose of their online chats. Give your child the opportunity to discuss their experiences on online games, positive or negative.

For younger children

- Choose a game with a closed chat, where children can only chat with people they know. You may be able to change the privacy settings in games to limit the people they can talk to.
- Supervise your child's use of online chats and set appropriate boundaries. The [Childnet Family Agreement](#) is a great way to discuss and record these expectations.
- Remind your child that online chats should stay on topic and relevant if they are talking to somebody they do not know offline, for example they should only be talking about the game.
- Ensure your child is aware that if they are asked for personal information, photos, videos or livestreams or to meet up with somebody, they need to tell an adult immediately and report it.

Where can I go for more help and advice?

[CEOP Safety Centre](#) – To report any concerns of an individual contacting a child and asking for personal information, to meet up or for photos, videos or livestreams.

[Family Video Game Database](#) – Detailed advice about different games and their features. This website also suggests alternative options for any games you do not want your child to play.

[Common Sense Media](#) – Breaks down the content of games (as well as books, films, apps, websites) into categories to gain a clear picture of what it is like. This is a subscription service, but it does allow 3 free reviews per month.

[Internet Matters](#) – Provides clear instructions on how to set up parental controls on games, apps, devices and even Wi-Fi routers. [Childnet](#) – Help and advice pages for children and for parents and carers.

Meet our Safeguarding Team

Tracy Curnin	Simon Duncan	Hayley Owen	Ellen Foxall	Karen Bridgwater
				
DSL	Deputy DSL	Deputy DSL	Deputy DSL	Safeguarding Officer

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Top Tips for... MANAGING SCREEN TIME

According to the latest stats, people aged between 8 and 17 spend four hours on digital devices during an average day. Obviously, a new year is ideal for fresh starts and renewed efforts – so lots of families are trying to cut down their combined screen time right now, creating more moments to connect with each other and relying less on gadgets to have fun. Our top tips on reducing screen time are for everyone, so you can get your whole family involved in turning over a new leaf this year!

Buy Milk

GET OUT AND ABOUT

If the weather's decent, spend some time in the garden or go for a walk. Even a stroll to the local shop would do: the main thing is getting some fresh air and a break from your screens.

TRY A TIMED TRIAL

When you're taking a screen break to do a different activity or a chore, turn it into a game by setting yourself a timer. Can you complete your task before the alarm goes off?

GO DIGITAL DETOX

Challenge yourself and your family to take time off from screens, finding other things to do. You could start off with half a day, then build up to a full day or even an entire weekend.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Let your family see you successfully managing your own screen time. You'll be showing them the way, and it might stop some of those grumbles when you do want to go online.

AGREE TECH-FREE ZONES

Nominate some spots at home where devices aren't allowed. Anywhere your family gathers together, like at the table or in the living room, could become a 'no phone zone'.

HOLD A SCREEN TIME AMNESTY

As a family, agree specific windows when it's OK to use devices. This should help everyone to balance time on phones or gaming with enjoying quality moments together.

BE MINDFUL OF TIME

Stay aware of how long you've been on your device for. Controlling how much time you spend in potentially stressful areas of the internet – like social media platforms – can also boost your wellbeing.

'PARK' PHONES OVERNIGHT

Set up an overnight charging station for everyone's devices – preferably away from bedrooms. That means less temptation for late-night scrolling.

SWITCH ON DND

Research shows that micro-distractions like message alerts and push notifications can chip away at our concentration levels. Put devices on 'do not disturb' until you're less busy.

TAKE A FAMILY TECH BREAK

Set aside certain times when the whole family puts their gadgets away and enjoys an activity together: playing a board game, going for a walk or just having a chat.

SOCIALISE WITHOUT SCREENS

When you're with friends, try not to automatically involve phones, TVs or other tech. Having company can be loads more fun if your attention isn't being split.

WIND DOWN PROPERLY

Try staying off phones, consoles, tablets and so on just before you go to sleep. Reading or just getting comfy in bed for a while can give you a much more restful night.

Meet Our Expert

Minds Ahead design and deliver the UK's only specialist postgraduate mental health qualifications. They also provide training and support to education organisations and local authorities – empowering school leaders and staff with the knowledge and tools to shape their settings into inclusive communities where the mental health of pupils and personnel is prioritised.



DEVICE BOX

The National College



National Online Safety

#WakeUpWednesday