



Safeguarding Newsletter

Issue 14 - 21.3.25

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.

WhatsApp Group Chats

In the last few weeks school staff have been picking up various issues in upper school regarding conduct on pupils WhatsApp group chats. One of the issues facing parents is that your child could have been added into a group where there are other contacts from the creator's contacts included. Your child will not necessarily know all of these people and there is potential for your child to be exposed to inappropriate adults or material.

Please talk to your child about not being part of a WhatsApp group with people they do not know and that any content can be screenshot so to be aware of their conduct whilst part of a wider group.

This is from the National College; "WhatsApp is one of the most popular messaging apps available and, as of 2024, has been made accessible to users as young as thirteen. With end-to-end encryption preventing even the platform itself from viewing any messages that users send on it, this app has been regularly utilised by those looking to keep their conversations private.

Unfortunately, the service poses several risks to its younger users – from misinformation and bullying to potential criminal exploitation – and it's vital that parents and educators understand these concerns and how to address them. The guide attached to this newsletter delves into the online safety risks of WhatsApp and offers expert advice on how to safeguard any young people who use the platform.



Streamers

Livestreaming is now a major part of children's entertainment, evolving from gamers sharing screens into a booming industry with diverse personalities. While watching streamers can be entertaining, it comes with no small number of risks for children, such as misinformation, negative influences, and inappropriate content. With over 2.5 million viewers on Twitch – the current most popular streaming platform – at any one time, the guide attached to this newsletter highlights the potential dangers associated with watching livestreams and the importance of staying informed.

Online Safety Survey

Internet Matters has published findings from its fourth digital wellbeing survey, an annual study looking at how children are affected by their experiences online. The survey of over 1,000 families looked at the positive and negative impact of digital technology on physical, emotional, social and developmental wellbeing.

Key findings include an increasingly polarised online landscape in which the Internet is becoming more essential but also more distressing for children, although the positive impacts continue to outweigh the negatives.

While the majority of children reported feeling safe online (77%), this is lower than the previous year (81%) with vulnerable children less likely to feel safe than their peers.

The full report can be found here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/press-release/children-experiencing-harm-online-in-the-uk-remains-stubbornly-high/>

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Mental Health Ambassadors

Miss Gregory has been working with Reflexions and a group of Year 5 and 6 children to set up a group of Mental Health Ambassadors. They have done an assembly for the children in school to explain who they are and how they can help in school. We look forward to seeing how their roles in school can help promote healthy minds and habits.

What is Triple P?

Triple P is a parenting programme, but it doesn't tell you how to be a parent. It's more like a toolbox of ideas. You and your family choose the ideas you need. You decide the way you want to use them. It's all about making Triple P work for you.

There are so many different types of Triple P and ways to do it. From popping into your local family hub for a quick tip sheet on toilet training, to a two-hour sleep workshop, seminar, online or longer face to face groups.

We say parents-but what that means is parents, carers & supportive friends/relatives/professionals-it takes a village to raise a child.

What is available in Dudley:

You can get on and complete online on your own or with a friend/relative and get in touch if you get stuck with anything. Or you can complete the different programmes face to face or via Teams with support people. Some of the sessions are in a group and some done on an individual phone call.

- Triple P - For parents of children aged 18 months to 11 years. (8 sessions)
- Triple P TEEN - For parents of children aged 11-16. (8 sessions)
- Triple P Transitions - for parents who are no longer together with the other parent of their child, if you are struggling with stress, anger etc and coping with a separation/divorce. (5 session)
- Triple P Stepping Stones - For parents of a child with a disability aged 2 – 12. (9 sessions)
- Triple P Fear - less - for parents of a child aged 6 plus who suffers with anxiety. (6 sessions)
- Triple P for babies - For expecting parents or those with a baby up to one year old. (8 sessions)

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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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about STREAMERS

Livestreaming has become a big part of the entertainment people consume, and what began as a series of gamers sharing their screens has grown into a huge industry packed with personalities – and potential risks for your children. With over 2.5 million people watching Twitch, the most popular streaming service, at any one time, it's important to remain aware of the risks associated with streamers.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some gaming streamers will stick to family-friendly titles, but others will play more violent games that tend to be more popular. Non-gaming streamers could, in theory, discuss just about anything, and some streamers will often stream in revealing outfits.



NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

While things have improved, streamers are often paid by companies to promote products, and this isn't always stated explicitly. While it's unlikely these goods will be harmful to your child, some streamers and influencers have engaged (knowingly or not) in scams in the past.



FINANCIAL HARM

Streamers will often have donation buttons on their screens for users to submit money. What can start as small amounts can quickly spiral as streamers engage with paying viewers more often, potentially leading to financial issues.



UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Influencers often showcase how glamorous their lives are, making some users feel as though they are lesser. However, it's important to stress that, in many ways, this is an act, or at the very least, not common. Logan Paul, who has been successful as a streamer and influencer, has a Pokemon card worth \$5 million, but this is atypical of anyone working in the medium.



MISINFORMATION

Streamers are, in many ways, just like us – and they can get things wrong or reel off an opinion without having thought about it. Some can simply say awful things to get a rise out of viewers or to sway them to their side of a hot topic.



ADDICTION AND SCREEN TIME

If your child is watching a lot of a particular streamer, it can be just as damaging to their social life as playing too many video games.



Advice for Parents & Educators

EXPLAIN HOW STREAMING WORKS

For a younger viewer, being a streamer or influencer seems aspirational, but it involves a lot of work and no small degree of good fortune. Streamers are often managed and unable to speak freely due to sponsors, and influencers are just that – influencing young minds, for better or for worse.



CHECK OUT STREAMING PLATFORMS

While Twitch was the de facto streaming service for years, YouTube has gained popularity, too. Then there are Kick and Rumble, which have grown in popularity with moves for big-name streamers – despite many being dogged by controversy.



DO NOT LOG PAYMENT INFORMATION

Streamers can reward donations with additional content, on-camera "shout outs" and more. If you're unsure about who or what your child is watching, consider avoiding linking payment information. This is especially notable with Twitch, which is owned by Amazon and therefore has some crossover.



SET SCREEN TIME LIMITS

You can set screentime limits for mobile apps on iOS and Google, but with other platforms like a PC it may be more difficult to keep tabs. Consider checking in regularly to ensure your children aren't watching content they shouldn't be.



Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is the Games Editor of the Daily Star, and has been working in the gaming and tech industry for five years. A regular visitor to the App Store to try out new tools, he's also a parent and therefore understands the importance of online safety. He's also a tech and fitness writer and has been published at sites including IGN, TechRadar, and plenty more.



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Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/streamers>

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WHATSAPP

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

WhatsApp is a free messaging service owned by Meta which allows users to send text and voice messages, make video calls, share multimedia – such as images, videos, documents and polls – and have group chats. WhatsApp messages are encrypted, meaning only you and the recipient can view what is sent. While this privacy may sound attractive on paper, this app unfortunately comes with several risks that must be considered – especially for younger users.

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it a lucrative hunting ground for scammers. Recent examples include posing as the target's child, requesting a money transfer because of a spurious 'emergency' and even cons where fraudsters trigger a verification message by attempting to log in to your account, then, posing as WhatsApp, call or text to ask you to repeat the code back to them, giving them access to your private messages and personal information.

CHANNELS

Channels let users follow interests without sharing their phone numbers or sending direct messages, allowing only votes on polls and reacting to posts with emojis. However, fraudulent channels can impersonate legitimate organizations, tricking people into sharing personal data and even spreading misinformation or hate speech. Additionally, WhatsApp may collect details about followed channels and sell this information to third parties, raising data privacy concerns.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's connectivity and ease of use allows news to be shared rapidly – whether it's true or not. To combat the spread of misinformation, messages forwarded more than five times on the app now display a "Forwarded many times" label and a double arrow icon. This makes users aware that the message they've just received is far from an original – and might not be entirely factual, either.

CHAT LOCK

Another new feature named 'Chat Lock' allows users to store certain messages or chats in a separate 'locked chats' folder, saved behind a passcode, fingerprint or face ID authentication. While this usually functions as intended, it can potentially be exploited by younger users to hide conversations and content that they suspect their parents wouldn't approve of – such as the sharing of age-inappropriate material.

DISAPPEARING MESSAGES

Disappearing messages are useful for sharing personal or sensitive information, but young people may have a false sense of privacy regarding the content they share. These messages disappear after anywhere from 24 hours to 90 days – depending on the user's preference – or can even be set to be viewed one time only. However, the recipient can 'keep' the message by bookmarking or screenshotting it, making them not as private as they may first appear.

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, which can be helpful for friends meeting up or parents checking that their child's safety on the way home, for example. However, children are able to share their location with anyone in their contacts list or a mutual group – potentially letting strangers identify their live location.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage children to treat unexpected messages with caution. Get them to consider, for example, whether it sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

THINK BEFORE SHARING

Help children understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy – and all too common – for content sent to one user to then be shared more widely, and even publicly on social media. Encourage them to consider how an ill-judged message might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence. Real-life friendships are far more important than likes, after all.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval. To do this, go to Privacy, then Groups. You can give permission to My Contacts or My Contacts Except... Additionally, if the child needs to use Live Location, emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need – and then turn it off.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Have a conversation with youngsters about how they're using WhatsApp, emphasising that it's for their own safety. If you spot a 'Locked Chats' folder, you might want to talk about the sort of messages that are in there, who they're with and why a child might want to hide them. Also, if a young user has sent any 'view once' content, discuss their reasons for using this feature.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian Government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/whatsapp-2025>

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