

Berrybrook's Parent E-safety Newsletter



DEAR PARENTS AND CARERS,

In this E-safety newsletter, we have identified the latest National Online Guidance (see overleaf). There are some serious issues raised about prolonged use of devices for gaming or social media. If your child uses a phone, device, or console of some sort, then it is worth reading.

If you have any concerns or would like any more information about E-safety, please do not hesitate to contact us at the school office.

DID YOU KNOW?

Statistics show that 8-17 year old children spend an average 4 hours a day on devices such as phones or consoles! Whilst they can be great fun, and very useful, there are studies showing how too much screen time has long term side effects.

Why not try and 'park' phones overnight - this involves setting up an overnight charging station for everyone's devices - preferably away from bedrooms. That means less temptation for late-night scrolling.

SENSO

In school, we have a monitoring system called SENSO..

Online safety is important everywhere and school is no different. In order to support our safeguarding in school, we use an online usage monitoring system called SENSO. SENSO monitors pupil and staff devices and flags up any inappropriate or concerning words typed or viewed. A screenshot and report is then sent to the Head of School who will investigate what has happened - this could be as simple as learning about a specific topic in a lesson, e.g. PSHE or History, or a mistype/ misspell or it could need pupils to be spoken to check on their wellbeing or online activity. SENSO is used in conjunction with filtering systems so pupils access to certain sites is blocked.

Online Safety Day 2024

The children have completed tasks and activities to raise awareness on the forever constant changes taking place within our digital world. It has helped the children develop strategies of what to do if they are worried about something that they may come across when using the internet in school or at home.

[Report Harmful Content Button | SWGfL](#) You can install a 'report harmful content button' onto your child's devices so they can easily click the button if they come across something online that makes them feel unsafe.

Tips to try:

1. Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.
2. Ask them about how they stay safe online.
3. Ask them if they know where to go for help.
4. Think about how you each use the internet—how could you use the internet as a family?

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about PERSUASIVE DESIGN ONLINE

'Persuasive design' refers to the techniques that companies employ to influence our thoughts and behaviours when we're on the internet. These approaches can be spotted on websites, in apps and even as part of some video games. Persuasive design means that this content has been deliberately presented in a way that's intended to encourage you to spend your time or money (or both). These methods often prove highly effective at keeping people engaged and invested for longer than we might expect.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

POTENTIAL ADDICTION

In the digital world, persuasive design can make certain activities more addictive and harder to walk away from: some people may begin to feel anxious or irritated without access to their device or their favourite app, for example. It can also often leave users feeling isolated, as – if they spend most of their time on social media – they may start to find it difficult to talk to other people in real life.

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Scrolling online or gaming without regular breaks is proven to be harmful to our mental health. The constant bombardment of news stories (many of them negative), images and influencers' posts can create sensations of unease, uncertainty and FOMO (fear of missing out). Young people can get so immersed in this environment that they become less likely to spot misleading posts.

PROLONGED SCROLLING

Social media can draw any of us – regardless of age – into a continuous pattern of refreshing our screen, following posts and links down rabbit holes or reading countless comments made by others. This aimless scrolling can eat up time which could have been spent on more productive activities. It could also lead younger users into areas of the online world which aren't age appropriate.

SENSORY OVERLOAD

Repetitively scrolling, clicking on links or playing games can create an unending stream of new information and visual stimuli. Put it this way: social media isn't exactly renowned as a carefree, chilled-out environment. Such overstimulation can become too much for young people to handle, resulting in sensory overload and causing them to feel stressed, overwhelmed and exhausted.

COSTLY ADDITIONS

Video games sometimes display offers for downloadable content or loot boxes which can be bought with real money. While these 'microtransactions' temptingly promise to improve a player's gaming experience, most of the time they are money sinks. Young people in particular, excited by the chance of enhancing their game, could spend quite a sizeable sum very quickly indeed.

PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

Hours spent sitting and scrolling means far less time moving around and getting exercise: hardly ideal for a young person's physical health. Additionally, prolonged exposure to the light given off by a phone's screen can lead to eye fatigue and discomfort, especially if viewing it in the dark. Extended phone use before bed can also impact on sleep quality, affecting mood and energy levels over the following days.

KEEP SCROLLING

WIN TO WIN

27 new posts

Advice for Parents & Carers

ESTABLISH LIMITS

Talk to your child about setting some time limits on how long they can use their phone, tablet or console in the evenings or at weekends – or perhaps how often they can go on a specific app, game or website. You could also decide to involve the whole family in creating this shared screen time agreement, making things fair (and healthier) for everyone.



ENCOURAGE MINDFULNESS

Acknowledging any addiction is key in overcoming it – and compulsive scrolling is no different. If anything mentioned in this guide sounds familiar, it could help to have an honest, open chat with your child about how much time they spend online. Get them to think about how often they scroll through social media aimlessly or habitually open it up whenever they have a spare moment.

NIX NOTIFICATIONS

Stop knee-jerk responses at the source by turning off push notifications and alerts. Whether it's a gaming notification or a social media update, these not-so-gentle reminders are designed to catch our attention and lure us back to our device. Switching them off – or even deleting any particularly intrusive apps – can help prevent your child from being reeled back into the online world.



MAKE A CHECKLIST

Considering a list of relevant questions can be an effective way of helping children figure out why they're scrolling on certain sites or consuming particular pieces of content. A checklist can prompt young people to ask themselves if they're learning anything or benefiting from this activity – or if they're wasting their time. Taking a step back can sometimes help us to see things more clearly.



Meet Our Expert

Belinda Jennings has more than 22 years' experience in the field of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). As well as delivering workshops and training for young people, parents and schools, she is also a subject matter expert on RSHE for the Department of Education.



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<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/>

