Learning Opportunities

SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

July 2025

Advice for Parents and Carers

Welcome to our latest Safeguarding newsletter.
We aim to provide you with useful links, tips and the latest, relevant help and advice on issues we feel will be of importance to you.
If you would like any more information, please do not hesitate to contact the school

As we approach the Summer holidays, our focus in this newsletter will be around providing information to keep children and young people safe during the holiday period and beyond.

The HAF Programme

The HAF Programme in Kent provides healthy, nutritious food and exciting, enriching activities for children and young people during the school holidays. It also supports their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Families of children aged 4 to 16 years, who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM), can access the opportunities for free during the Summer holiday. More information is available on the HAF Programme website.
All eligible families will be issued an electronic EVoucher. These can be used by the families to find a local HAF Programme for summer 2025 and request a place.

WATER SAFETY

It is perfectly natural to want to cool off when it's hot during the holiday time. Unsuitable rivers and quarries hide dangers below, not taking into accounts the hazards of freezing cold water and currents. Teenagers especially are drawn in by peers and a keenness for risky behaviours.
It will be important to remind your children how to stay safe in or alongside water.

Swim in safe areas only. It's always best to swim in places that are supervised by a lifeguard. No one can anticipate changing ocean currents, rip currents, sudden storms, or other hidden dangers. If something does go wrong, lifeguards are trained in rescue techniques.

Be careful about diving. Diving injuries can cause head injury, permanent spinal cord damage, paralysis, and sometimes even death. Only dive in areas known to be safe, such as the deep end of a supervised pool. If an area has "No Diving" or "No Swimming" signs, pay attention to them. A "No Diving" sign means the water isn't safe for a head-first entry. Even if you plan to jump in feet first, check the water's depth before you leap to make sure there are no hidden rocks or other hazards.

Surviving the Summer Holidays

Tips for a Successful Summer

1. Don't Over-Schedule Yourself or Your Children

While structured activities can be beneficial, it's important not to over-schedule during the summer break. Try to keep a balance between structured and unstructured time. Children often benefit from the ability to pursue their interests at their own pace, fostering self-motivation and independence. Remember, this is their time to relax and recharge. Having some downtime also allows for spontaneous family activities, promoting creativity and flexibility in your children.

2. Make Time for Fun

Summer break should be about fun! So prioritise enjoyment and create lasting memories. Think outside the box for fun summer activities. The possibilities are endless and can be tailored to your family's interests.

3. Maintain Structure for Your Children

Despite the break from school, it's essential to maintain a certain level of routine. Consistent bedtimes, and meal-times can give children a sense of security and normalcy during summer.

4. Be Flexible

While having a game plan for summer is great, be ready to switch things up. Summer is perfect for spontaneous trips. Sometimes, the best memories are made when you stray from the plan.

5. Take Some Time for Yourself

Remember, self-care is not selfish. It's necessary for your well-being and, by extension, your family. So whether it's a quiet morning coffee, a yoga class, or simply a walk in the park, ensure you set aside some 'me' time.

6. Remember That It Is All Temporary

Summer break, with its unique challenges and joys, is short-lived. So, try to enjoy the moments – even the tough ones – because before you know it, the school term will begin again. Children grow up quickly; these summer breaks are precious times to bond, learn, and grow together as a family.

Top summer holiday safeguarding issues in the UK

These are around increased vulnerability of children to abuse, exploitation, neglect, and risky behaviours due to the absence of school structures, increased online activity, and potential exposure to unsafe environments or individuals. Summer holidays are also now recognised as a high-risk period for child criminal exploitation, with criminal networks using this gap in supervision and safeguarding to target, groom and recruit young people into illegal activities.

Risky Behaviors:

Without the structure of school, some children and young people may turn to drugs or alcohol, or become involved in weapon or gang-related crime, particularly with concerns around county lines.

Online Safety:

Increased online time during holidays makes children susceptible to cyberbullying, grooming, exploitation, and radicalization. Young people may also meet up with people they've only met online, posing a risk.

Unsafe Environments and Activities:

Children may be exposed to dangers around water (reservoirs, rivers, lakes, canals), exploring abandoned buildings or building sites, or playing on railway lines, all of which carry significant risks of injury.

Relationship Tensions:

Increased time spent together at home can lead to heightened relationship tensions and stresses within families, impacting children's well-being.

How to keep your teenager safe during the holidays

What we can do as parents and carers

- Be curious, not confrontational. Ask open questions and make it clear children can talk to you about anything.
- Look out for signs like unexpected gifts, money, sudden mood swings, secrecy, or new older friends.
- Trust your instincts – if something doesn't feel right, seek advice from school safeguarding leads or local authorities.
- Keep lines of communication open with school, youth clubs and other professionals involved with your child's care.

After puberty, everything changes; the way they look, the way they talk and what they want to do with their time is suddenly totally different. Whether they are out at their friend's house with their phone out of battery, raiding the alcohol or contemplating what a relationship feels like, it can seem like everything they do or say is designed to shock.

Although this may be how it feels to you, essentially, they are just learning about where the boundaries are by testing them. We learn by making mistakes, and a significant amount of those mistakes are made during our teenage years.

During the summer holidays, keeping a watchful eye on your teenager while also allowing them their space can present quite a challenge.

Define the Rules

At the start of the summer holidays, establish what is ok and what is definitely not ok – by doing so you will make sure you are acting in response to a situation in a preset manner rather than reacting in the moment. When we are upset, we sometimes say things we don't mean.

Get Tech Ready

The world our children live in is fundamentally different to the one we grew up in. Telephones, laptops and tablets offer them an instantaneous connection with the wiser world, an incredible tool for learning but also a potential danger. If you are concerned about any of their on-line behaviour, talk to them about it in a calm and collected way.

Give Them More Responsibility

It's easy to think that your teenager isn't capable of looking after themselves or their possessions, at a time when they will be engaging in more adult activities whether you like it or not, try giving them some proper responsibilities and increase how capable and confident they feel.

Talk Frankly and Openly about Key Issues

Whether it's sex or drugs, talk frankly and openly with your teenagers about these issues. We know about the dangers of taking drugs and engaging in unprotected sex, so why wouldn't we talk about them with our children? If you are struggling don't worry, many people do, just research ways of approaching these difficult topics.

Be Approachable and Open

In any situation, no matter how difficult or hard to explain, your child needs to know that they can come to you and talk about anything that is bothering them. Getting to the bottom of what is bothering your son or daughter is often difficult, but if you notice a significant change in their behaviour gently let them know that you are aware that something is going on, and that you are there to talk to whenever they need to.

Staying Safe Online … useful tips

Deepfake content

Deepfake content, also known as synthetic media, is computer generated content that looks and sounds real. Deepfake content can be used to spread misinformation, used in scams, or used to cause upset to others. It can be difficult to spot, so it is important to be aware of it. Find out more here:

https://swgfl.org.uk/topics/synthetic-media-deepfake/
https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/69009887

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT ONLINE MISTAKES

The online world is difficult to navigate, and mistakes will happen. When they do, it is important that as a parent / carer you are ready.

Stay Calm

If your child tells you about something that they have done wrong online, then try to stay calm and listen.

Be Honest

You may not know how to solve the issue but tell them you will help them work it out.

Solve It Together

Try and resolve the problem together to help your child learn and understand what went wrong. This will also develop their digital literacy skills.

You should also take the opportunity to review/set up any available parental controls.

Help and Support

If you feel like you may need support from an external organisation, then Parent Zone have listed some of the different organisations available: https://parentzone.org.uk/article/help-and-support

Sprunki

Is your child playing Sprunki? If they are, there are several versions of this game, so it is important to check which version they are playing and to then check its suitability for your child. For example, one version states:

"WARNING: This game contains disturbing images and scenes of explicit violence and gore".

Find out more here:
https://www.esafety.gov.au/keytopics/esafety-guide/sprunki

Omegle (and similar platforms)

Whilst the original Omegle no longer exists, there is now Ome.tv, other Omegle copycat sites as well as other sites with a similar concept. **We cannot stress enough that these sites should not be accessed by children due to the potential content and language used, which can be explicit.** As an example, Ome.tv connects you randomly to **other people via video chat** from across the world. Ome.tv does state that **it should only be used by adults.**

You can find out more information about Chat apps, including 'randomised chat forums' here:
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/

Online Challenges

According to Ofcom's latest Children's Media Use and Attitudes report "funny videos or those showing pranks or challenges continue to be the most popular type of VSP (video-sharing platforms) content for children, watched by 68% of 3-17-year-olds who watch videos."

If your child is watching this type of content, then you need to chat to them regularly, particularly about online challenges and the risks that they can pose. **There are challenges online that are risky/dangerous**. Sadly, there are reports that children have died as a consequence of attempting online challenges.

Children may not yet have developed the skills and ability to critically analyse that what they see online is not always safe for them to replicate. Make sure your child knows that they should talk to you (or another trusted adult) if they are thinking about trying something that they have seen online.

If your child has not heard about an online challenge, then do not draw attention to it as this may lead to them searching for it out of curiosity, so just talk about challenges in a general sense. Furthermore, reassure your child that challenges that suggest that terrible things will happen if they do not complete the tasks are not real.
The following link will provide you with further information as well as content to help you talk to your child:
https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/online-challenges-guide/

Group Chats

Group chats are where teens (and some adults) live today. Studies show that the average social media user is part of 83 group chats—and nearly half of teens say they're online "almost constantly," especially in those private, invite-only threads.

And where there's teens, there's drama. Group chats can quickly spiral into boundary-crossing, bullying or full-blown chaos. Unfortunately, most of it happens under the radar.

Discuss how group chats should be fun for *everyone*, not a place to hurt others. Emphasise that being part of a group chat means we all have a responsibility to keep it respectful. If you see something that doesn't feel right, it's okay to speak up or talk to a trusted adult. Remind your child that they won't be punished if they tell you something like this.

Pornography's influence on young people's mental and physical health.

The significant impact of pornography, social media, and influencer culture on the mental and physical health of young people, and how overexposure to these elements can alter behaviours in both primary and secondary school pupils is concerning.

Top Tips to Share with Children & Young People

- Take a deep breath when you feel stressed. It works!
- Don't do anything you aren't comfortable with. Ever.
- If you're on social media, You're a 'Content Producer.' Make It Count.
- Practice kindness & discretion on & offline. (Discuss Discretion!)
- Peer Pressure: Don't do anything you don't want to do.
- Be Body Positive. Be kind to yourself. Stop comparing.
- Critical Thinking: Challenge ideas, influencers, algorithms.
- If you cross the line, Own It, Acknowledge It, Apologise.
- There is NO shame in asking for help.
- Trust your instincts. They are usually right!

ACRONYMS

T - Talk to your child about online grooming & inappropriate content
A - Agree on a social media plan
L - Learn about the apps your children like so you can discuss them
K - Know how to turn on tools on iPads, smart phones, streaming services, etc

P- Parents - advocate healthy relationships.
A- Ask which friends have the 'Best Social Media' account & why.
R- Remind your children to practice discretion & kindness on & offline.
E- Educate young people about porn: It's for 18+ for a reason.
N- Never share private information with strangers on or offline.
T- Tell your children to trust their instincts! They are usually right.
S- Safe Space: Make them feel safe to share anything with you.

Useful Contacts

- Childline
- Fumble.org.uk (Sex Advice for Teens)
- AMAZE (Sex Ed for younger kids)
- Youngminds Mental Health Support
- wearehumen.org (male mental health)
- www.b-eat.co.uk (eating disorders)
- The Calm Zone Body Talks for Young Men
- REPORT REMOVE if a victim of revenge or sextortion
- Kidscape Anti-Bullying Helpline: 08451 205 204 info@kidscape.org.uk Has a wide range of publications for young people, parents and carers

Our Safeguarding Team

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We would like to thank you for your continued support, and to wish you a very happy, safe Summer Holiday!!

Our School website features a Safeguarding area which includes links to our policies and our parents / carers & visitors Safeguarding leaflet
https://learningopps.org/safeguarding/

A Parent's Guide to Online Influencers

What is an online influencer?

It is a person who has a large number of people following them online through gaming and social media.

You may hear an online influencer commonly referred to as either a YouTuber, social influencer, streamer or gamer.

Subscribe, follow, share, like are just some of the ways online influencers build their fan base.
Follow me!
Give me a 'like'!
Share my video!
Subscribe to my channel!

They can influence their audiences behaviour by being entertaining, offering advice and guidance.

The more views they get, the more popular they become.

However…

Online influencers are not regulated and for many, their aim is to grow an audience that they can then sell products to and make money from.

Brands will pay online influencers to promote, advertise and recommend their products.

Children can easily be convinced and persuaded by friendly engaging content to give money or subscribe to join a communities for a fee.
Looking good!
Enter a competition to win skins!
Loot box win every time!
Free points to build your team!

Some influencers can be poor role models who show children negative behaviours such as drugs, alcohol, bad language, fake news, violence and dangerous pranks.

It can be very easy to brainwash children and fill their minds to get them to act differently. We need to be mindful, whilst young people spend much more time online, they are very likely to come across many different types of influencers.

Would you like to join our gang?
I HATE YOU
Can you help us?
Check out these real videos on our page

What you can do to help keep your child safe online

- Always discuss regularly with your child what they watch and follow online.
- If your child follows an online influencer, then if you do the same, you will be able receive the content as well and be better prepared in helping to advise your child.
- Discuss regularly the positive and negative elements of online influencers.
- Always let your child know that they should never purchase anything online without gaining your permission first.
- Always let your child know that they should always say if they see or hear anything online that makes them feel scared or uncomfortable and to never arrange to meet someone who they have met online.
- Let them know that they do not have to feel as though they have done something wrong, nobody is going to get cross and it is not their fault.
- If you are concerned with anything you or your child has seen or asked to do, please call Childline or tell your child's school.

Always encourage your child to:

Tell a parent or trusted adult, like a teacher.

Tell an older brother or sister.

ChildLine
0800 1111

Tell Childline. They will know how to help.