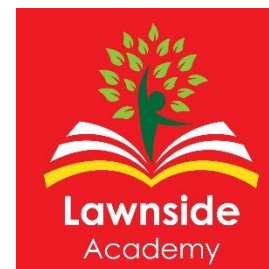


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Wednesday 15th July 2026

Dear Parents / Carers,

Please can we politely request that you do not let your children play on the pirate ship, trim trail or field before and after school. These are wet and slippery in the morning, therefore dangerous, and children are bringing wet/ muddy feet into school.

The gates are opened at 8:40am, and the bell is rung at 8:50am. This only gives children 10 minutes before school; where they need to be fully supervised by parents, please.

Children are not permitted to climb the trees at any point during the day at Lawnside.

As we reach the final days of the school year, there is a wonderful sense of energy and accomplishment across the school. Walking through the corridors, it is incredibly rewarding to see how much our pupils have grown, both academically and personally, over the last ten months. This final newsletter is an opportunity to celebrate those achievements, say some important farewells to departing staff and pupils, and welcome the new faces joining our community in September.

Celebrating Our Leavers and Welcoming Our New Team

We have some important transitions to share as we say goodbye to those moving on and welcome new faces to our team. To our wonderful Year 6 pupils: we are incredibly proud of the mature, kind, and hard-working young people you have become, and we wish you every success as you take your next steps into secondary school. Alongside our leavers, we bid a very fond farewell to Miss Bills, Miss Hickton, Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Thomas, thanking them for their dedicated service and wishing them all the best in their next chapters. Looking ahead to September, we are delighted to welcome Ms. Barbet, Miss Barker, Mrs. Brennan, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Lowe and Miss Williams to our teaching and teaching assistant teams, and we look forward to the fresh energy and expertise they will bring to our school community.

Second-Hand Uniform Sale

We will be hosting a second-hand uniform sale this Thursday morning before school starts. This is a fantastic opportunity to stock up on spares or larger sizes for the upcoming year.

Price: All items are priced at £1 each

Payment: Cash only – please bring change where possible, as we will have limited coins on hand to make change.

Thank you for your support in helping us recycle and reuse!



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Pupil Artwork on Display at the Doctor's Surgery

We are delighted to share that a selection of our pupils' artwork is now on display at the local doctor's surgery. The children have worked incredibly hard on these pieces, and it's wonderful to see their creativity showcased in the community.

If you are visiting the surgery over the next few weeks, do take a moment to look at the display. The staff there have already commented on how bright and uplifting the artwork is.

Well done to all the children involved – we are very proud of you.



Mrs. Gardner's Stay and Play

We are pleased to share that Mrs. Gardner's Stay and Play sessions will recommence next term on **Tuesday 15th September**. We look forward to welcoming our youngest community members and their families back then!

Rescheduled "Meet the Teacher" Open Evening

Due to the recent heatwave and high temperatures, we made the decision to reschedule our "Meet the Teacher" open evening to ensure a comfortable and safe environment for everyone.

The event will now take place on Thursday 10th September, from 3:30pm to 4:15pm.

This will be a great opportunity to pop into your child's new classroom, meet their teacher, and hear about the exciting year ahead. We appreciate your understanding and look forward to seeing you there.

Special Notice for New Year 1 Parents:

We kindly invite our new Year 1 parents to come in slightly earlier at 3:00pm. Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Salvatore will be delivering the Year 1 meeting that was unfortunately missed last week. They look forward to catching up with you then!

Incredible Fundraising: Well Done, Belle!

We want to share a massive congratulations to Belle, who recently had her hair cut at school for an incredibly worthy cause.

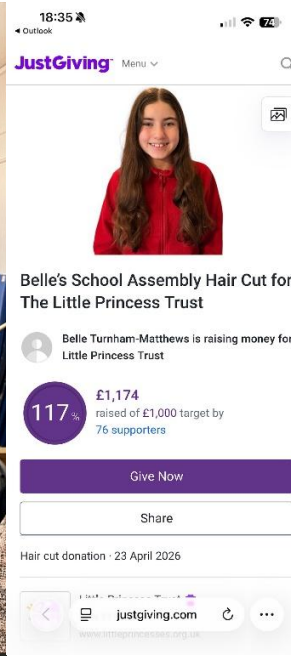
Thanks to your amazing generosity and support, Belle has raised a phenomenal £1,174 for The Little Princess Trust, alongside donating her hair to be made into a real-hair wig for children undergoing cancer treatment.

We are all incredibly proud of Belle's kindness and initiative. Thank you to everyone in our school community who supported her fundraising journey!



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Class Spotlight; Culinary Creations in Year 5

This half term, Year 5 have been exploring complementary flavours through a series of taste-testing activities. They then put their new knowledge into practice by preparing a delicious starter: fresh melon with a honey and lime dressing, and a ploughman's lunch using a mild creamy cheese and tangy chutney. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed making – and, of course, tasting – their creations!



A Wonderful Achievement for George!

We are incredibly proud to celebrate the fantastic achievement of our pupil, George, who contributed his brilliant design ideas for the train featured in the new 16-metre community mural at Biggleswade Railway Station! The stunning mural, which celebrates the town's rich market gardening history alongside the railways' 200th anniversary, was officially unveiled recently. George was even invited to the official unveiling ceremony as a special guest alongside the Town Mayor of Biggleswade, Councillor Jonathan Woodhead. Well done, George – what a wonderful and lasting contribution to our local community!



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Important Notice: School Attendance and Term-Time Holidays

We would like to remind all parents and carers about the strict government regulations regarding taking children out of school during term time.

No Term-Time Holidays Will Be Authorised: Please note that holidays during the school term cannot be authorised by the school. This policy strictly applies to all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) considerations.

Government-Mandated Fines: The local authority will progress fines for unauthorised leave. Government guidance dictates that a fine will be issued if a child misses 10 sessions (5 school days) within a rolling 10-week period.

A Strict Legal Requirement: Please note that these regulations are set by national government guidance, not by the school itself.

Where the Money Goes: The school does not receive any revenue or financial benefit from these fines. All funds collected go directly to the local authority.

We appreciate your cooperation and support in ensuring your child maintains excellent attendance to support their learning and development.

Keeping Our Children Safe Online This Summer

As we head into the summer break, children will naturally spend more time online – whether they are exploring virtual worlds in Fortnite, connecting with friends, or enjoying creative apps. To help parents and educators navigate this digital landscape, The National College has shared key guidance through their #WakeUpWednesday campaign (see the advice attached to the bottom of this newsletter).

Key Takeaways for Families:

Promote Digital Balance: With extra free time, it is vital to balance screen time with outdoor activities and establish clear boundaries, like keeping devices out of bedrooms overnight.

Understand the Platforms: Popular games like Fortnite offer immersive fun but carry risks such as in-game costs, exposure to unmoderated voice chats, and potential scams.

Stay Alert to Serious Risks: Crucially, adults should stay informed about the signs of online grooming and sextortion. Groomers often use fake identities, online gifts, or private group chats to build trust.

Keep Conversations Open: Rather than having one "big talk," weave digital safety into regular, everyday conversations. Encourage critical thinking, explore privacy settings together, and foster a "tell me" culture where children feel safe reporting anything that makes them uncomfortable without the fear of being punished or losing their devices.

Eco Committee Update!

The Eco Committee has worked incredibly hard this year, launching several brilliant initiatives to look after both our school environment and the wider community. Thanks to your amazing contributions towards our Teddy Tombola and Sir David Attenborough Day, we raised a fantastic £237! With these funds, we have purchased a beautiful sustainable bench for our wildlife garden, and we have enough left over to help develop the area even further. We would also like to say a HUGE THANK YOU to the wonderful parents who have come out to support



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us most weeks – we couldn't do it without you! Next year, we hope to create even more habitats for local wildlife, including a new water feature.

Summer Eco-Adventures!

If you are looking for some eco-friendly activities over the summer holidays, here are a few great ideas:

Merlin Bird ID App: A free, brilliant app from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It helps you and your children identify birds by sight, sound, or simple questions – and it works offline!

Cambridge University Botanic Garden: Check out the fun Professor Filbert's Plant Heroes trail.

Shuttleworth: Perfect for multiple days out! Once you purchase tickets, you can return as many times as you like within 30 days.

RSPB Sandy: Head over for a fantastic family 'Minibest Safari' to see what bugs you can spot.

Attendance Guide for Parents / Carers

What YOU must do:

- Try to telephone the school before 8.50am each day of your child's absence.
- Tell the school in advance, of any medical appointments and bring in appointment cards/letters.
- Please do not book holidays in term-time as these will be unauthorised (and you may be fined), unless in exceptional circumstances.
- If you are not sure whether your child is well enough to attend school, send them in anyway as they often perk up on arrival.
- Have a backup plan for if you have transport issues, call on a family member, neighbour or friend.
- If you and your child are experiencing difficulties with school attendance then talk to us as a first step so we can help!

What WE will do:

- Check your child's attendance every day.
- Phone home to discuss your child's attendance with you.
- Invite you into school for attendance meetings if we are concerned.
- If we cannot establish a reason for absence, then we may make a welfare home visit.

Free School Meals (FSM)

Your child will get a free school meal if you receive a qualifying benefit, and your child is:

- at school
- studying in further education
- at a sixth form college

The qualifying benefits to receive free school meals for children are:

- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part IV of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and you have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)



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If you think you meet the free school meals eligibility criteria, please call Central Bedfordshire Council on 0300 300 8306. When you call to apply for free school meals, please have the following information ready:

- National Insurance numbers and dates of birth for you and your partner
- dates of birth for your children
- if you receive support from the National Asylum Support Service, your NASS number

Registering your child as eligible for FSM will bring more money to the school to help your child achieve. There are other benefits which may be available for children registered as eligible for FSM, i.e. help with the cost of music lessons or school trips and free access to CBC's holiday activities and food (HAF) programme.

We wish all families an enjoyable summer holiday, and we look forward to seeing everyone back on Monday 7th September.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Johnson
Head Teacher



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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

FORTNITE

AGE RESTRICTION
PEGI
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WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

With over 650 million registered users, Fortnite remains one of the most played and discussed online games globally. Known for its vibrant graphics, fast-paced gameplay, and cultural crossovers with everything from music artists to superhero franchises, the game continues to capture the attention of young people. This guide outlines the risks trusted adults need to know about, including game updates, and offers practical safety tips to help address them.

ALWAYS ONLINE

There's no single-player, offline mode in Fortnite; it can only be played online. Internet access can sometimes be an issue when you're out and about, both in terms of connectivity and using up data. You may find that dedicated, young Fortnite players are often less enthusiastic about family time or trips away – such as days out and holidays – than you might expect.

IN-GAME COSTS

Fortnite is free to download and play, but it does offer various additional purchases – limited-time cosmetic 'skins', music tracks, LEGO items, and battle passes. Children can feel pressured to spend money on V-Bucks – the in-game currency – to avoid missing out, particularly as exclusive items rotate frequently. Some items may not return to the store for years, while Battle Pass rewards are often "gone when they're gone".

VIRTUAL VIOLENCE

There's no avoiding that Fortnite is about shooting other players to eliminate them from the contest. That said, there's no blood or gore. The violence is rendered in a cartoonish style, and there are frequent comical touches to lighten the mood, such as mini-games and emotes. Guns and other weapons often look and behave realistically, so discretion is advised. Past seasons have introduced characters and references from mature franchises like The Witcher and Halo.

CROSSPLAY AND PARTY CHAT

Fortnite is popular with many gamers of various ages. Crossplay allows friends to play with each other, regardless of whether they're on an Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo Switch or PC, while the Party Chat feature allows them to talk to each other during the game. This can put youngsters at risk of exposure to strangers, inappropriate language, and cyberbullying.

FREQUENT UPDATES

Seasonal releases introduce new map changes, gameplay mechanics, and cosmetics. Ongoing updates can increase screen time and potential for obsession as children try to unlock rewards before the season ends. These regular renewals help to hold players' interest, but also give young gamers plenty of reasons to keep coming back. Seasons often change thematically.

POP CULTURE REFERENCES

Part of Fortnite's appeal is its ongoing crossovers with other popular franchises, ranging from films and TV shows like Power Rangers and Avatar: The Last Airbender, to comic book characters including Batman. Other collaborations with series, artists, and influencers may expose children to music, language, or ideas that are more suitable for older audiences.

Advice for Parents & Educators

DISCUSS SAFE SOCIAL INTERACTION

Talk with children about who they're playing with online. Coordinate play time with the child's friends for socialisation and safety in numbers. Encourage them to avoid private voice chats with strangers and remind them not to share personal information. Use real-life examples to explain potential risks, and remind them that if they see something concerning, they should tell a trusted adult.

SET SPENDING LIMITS

Fortnite's rotating store is a not-so-subtle mechanism for coaxing players into buying sought-after items before they disappear for weeks or months. This could lead to surprise transactions on bank cards if children are tempted into an impulse purchase. Parents could consider getting a prepaid card for the child or ensuring that purchases require adult authorisation. This can be done through parental settings on a console or account settings in the Epic Games app on PC.

ENJOY FORTNITE TOGETHER

Fortnite also offers split-screen gameplay, meaning that two people can play simultaneously on the same console or computer. This can be a good option for siblings or for when a child's friends visit, but it also offers an opportunity for parents to do something fun with their child, while making sure they're playing the game safely. Who knows? You might even teach them a thing or two!

BE WARY OF SCAMS

The immense popularity of Fortnite with younger audiences – that are generally more trusting – means there's no shortage of scammers looking to fraudulently obtain passwords and other personal data through techniques like phishing. As the developers point out on many of Fortnite's loading screens, they never ask for a player's account password outside of the game. Make sure any young player knows this.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is an experienced freelance writer and has been working in the gaming and tech industry for seven 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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10 Top Tips for Helping Children STAY SAFE ONLINE THIS SUMMER

Over the summer our children will, of course, have significantly more spare time now they are out of school. For many youngsters, it may be that a considerable amount of this extra freedom is spent online, using social media apps, video games, streaming services and other digital tech to have fun. For that reason, it's even more important for trusted adults to focus on online safety during the summer break – ensuring that our children are not only aware of the most common threats but also know what to do if they encounter something in the digital world that upsets or disturbs them.

1 ENGAGE WITH THEIR ACTIVITIES

It might not always be convenient, but try to make time to show interest in what your child's doing online. Ideally, get involved – by joining in with video gaming and discussing the apps they're using. It will make your child more likely to come to you with any future online worries or concerns.

2 FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING

Teach your child to question what they see in the digital world. As fake news increasingly uses AI to create believable audio, video and images, it will become even more important in future years to question the content that we see – and to know how to confirm it as true.

3 BE A DIGITAL ROLE MODEL

Take opportunities to demonstrate your empathy and understanding of others online, giving your child a positive template to follow. Watching you being a good digital citizen will help your child to learn an appropriate level of respect for the feelings, thoughts and privacy of other internet users.

4 EMPHASISE THE SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Among the internet's oceans of content, of course, are things which can be upsetting and concerning for young ones. There's always a chance that your child could stumble across inappropriate material, so it's wise to discuss in advance what they should do if this happens. Underline that they can always come to you if something online has worried them.

5 FIND A BALANCE

Communicating and competing online is fun, but shouldn't replace in-person socialising, exercise or being outdoors. Work with your child to find a healthy balance between their online and offline activities. Take into account what they're actually doing online: researching something or cooperating in a game, for example, is more valuable than simply browsing TikTok.

6 STAY AWARE

Keep an eye on your child's online activity and regularly check in with what they're doing. If you have serious concerns, you could discreetly view their browser history. The extent of monitoring should correspond to your child's age and maturity: younger children are likely to need closer observation.

10 REMEMBER TO HAVE FUN

Obviously, the digital world isn't without its dangers – but when navigated safely, it remains an exciting, engaging and educational place. Be mindful of the many risks, of course, but don't let them discourage you from supporting your child to explore and enjoy themselves in the online space.

9 KEEP DEVICES UPDATED

Ensuring any devices that your child uses to go online have the most up-to-date firmware and software installed is hugely beneficial. Many people put off downloading these regular updates, but very often they contain vital software patches which help to keep your devices and data secure.

8 TEACH BASIC SECURITY

It's important that children learn to keep their personal data safe, and understand how strong passwords can help with that. Explain the basics of digital security (showing them examples, if possible) and when they're a little older you could move on to more advanced methods like multi-factor authentication.

7 TAKE (PARENTAL) CONTROL

It's wise to capitalise on the parental controls offered by most internet service providers and the devices and software that children use. These controls allow you to manage the kind of content your child is able to access, and they can usually be adjusted to reflect your child's specific age.

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.



**National
Online
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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about KEEP CHILDREN SAFE ONLINE OVER SUMMER

School's out ... for summer! Yes, it's that time of the year again: around six weeks at home for ecstatic youngsters. For many young people, a bumper stint off school means a welcome chance to spend even more time with their games console, phone, tablet or smart TV. So whether your children are likely to be scrolling on Snapchat, nestling in front of Netflix or frying foes on Fortnite, we've put together some top tips to help you keep them safe online this holiday.

THERE'S NO NETWORK LIKE HOME

Teenagers, especially, tend to be delighted to find that a coffee shop, restaurant or shopping centre offers free WiFi. These public networks are much less secure than home WiFi, though, so discourage your child from making online purchases or entering personal details when out and about.

IT'S 'THE GREAT OUTDOORS' FOR A REASON

For most northern hemisphere-dwellers, this time of year is a rare opportunity to enjoy the outside world in pleasant weather. Remind your child how amazing it is to feel the sun on their back and fresh air in their lungs. Disney+ and Minecraft will still be there on drizzly Sundays in October.

PRIVATE INFO STAYS PRIVATE

It's worth checking your child's social media or gaming profiles occasionally to make sure they aren't inadvertently giving away too much information. Details such as their full name, address or where they go to school could all be used to track them down by individuals with sinister intentions.

KEEP TALKING

It sounds blindingly obvious, but having regular chats with your child about who they're talking to online, what games and apps they're using and what shows they're streaming is a huge benefit. It doesn't have to be every day or even every week, but it can signal potential issues well in advance.

LIGHTS OUT, SCREENS OFF

This is a golden rule: try to limit how much screen time your child has towards end of the day. Staring at the screen of a phone or tablet for too long before bed severely impacts a child's quality of sleep – which can play havoc with their concentration, mood and energy levels the next day.

FOCUS ON FACTS

The internet is phenomenal at spreading gossip. When children of certain ages aren't in daily contact at school, the digital rumour mill can go into overdrive. Remind your child not to believe everything they're told online – especially if the person involved isn't around to provide their side of the story.

WATCH FOR EXCESSIVE GAMING

With no school, children often take every opportunity to fit in 'just one more go' on their favourite game – sometimes at the cost of their daily routine, or having family time. A little extra gaming is to be expected in the holidays, but it could become problematic if it evolves into a recurring habit.

LIMIT SOCIAL AUDIENCES

When they're old enough, young people love to broadcast their summer holiday highlights all over social media. The unfortunate truth, however, is that we don't always know who might be viewing this content. Check the settings to ensure that only friends and family can see your child's posts.

DEMONSTRATE GOOD HABITS

Children often learn their digital behaviour from watching the grown-ups around them. So make sure your child observes you being positive and supportive on social media, for example – and, especially, sees that you know when it's time to switch the screen off, even though you're having fun.

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10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

ESSENTIAL ONLINE SAFETY

Children and young people use the internet every day to learn, play, and connect, but the online world is not always safe. For adults, it can be hard to keep up with the risks, including harmful content, cyberbullying and scams. These 10 tips provide clear and practical advice to support safer and healthier digital habits, helping young people to make informed, secure choices when using technology.

1 START EARLY CONVERSATIONS

Begin talking about online behaviour from the moment children start using devices. Use age-appropriate language and revisit topics regularly, making it clear they can speak to you about anything that upsets or confuses them. Keeping these chats open helps build trust, so children are more likely to come to you when needed.

2 PROMOTE SAFER SHARING

Children can overshare without understanding the risks. Remind them that photos, locations, or messages can be copied or shared beyond their intended audience. Explain how even private messages or group chats can be saved and/or misused. Talk about what is appropriate to post, message, and who it's safe to share with.

3 ENCOURAGE DIGITAL BALANCE

Many apps and games are designed to keep users engaged through rewards, likes, or constant updates. These features can make it hard for children to switch off. Talk openly about how these systems work and help children recognise when it's time to take a break. Building in tech-free routines supports a healthier balance and awareness of their screen time.

4 CREATE A SAFE SPACE FOR CONCERNS

When children come to you with a concern, respond with interest and care, rather than with alarm. Keeping your reaction measured helps them feel safe and supported. This doesn't mean ignoring serious issues; it means showing that you're there to help. When children trust that they can speak openly, they're more likely to feel supported through unpleasant online experiences, and to ask for help in future.

5 STAY INFORMED AND CURRENT

With emerging technologies like AI moving and changing so quickly, it's important to stay updated on how children are using new platforms, apps and games. Ask them to show you what they use and let them take the lead as you explore together. This opens up valuable conversations and helps you stay ahead of emerging risks and trends.

6 TEACH CRITICAL THINKING

Talk to children about how to recognise unreliable information or scams online. With AI-generated videos, photos, and stories becoming harder to spot, help children question what they see and encourage them to look for evidence, check sources, and ask questions. These skills will help them avoid risks, make smart choices, and develop healthy habits for the future.

7 SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

Involve children in conversations about device usage so they feel included. Agree on digital rules such as screen-time limits, age-appropriate apps, and no devices in bedrooms overnight. Use parental controls to block or filter harmful content and explain that rules are there to protect and support them, not to spoil their fun.

8 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Children often copy the behaviour of adults around them. Show them what balanced, respectful, and mindful use of technology looks like, such as avoiding scrolling during family time and speaking kindly in messages. If you expect certain behaviour from them online, make sure your own habits reflect the same standards.

9 EXPLORE PRIVACY SETTINGS TOGETHER

Show children how to use privacy tools on apps, games, and websites. Teach them to use strong passwords, block or report others in response to problems, and avoid sharing personal details. Explore settings together so they feel confident and in control, and explain that these features are there to help them stay safe online.

10 KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP

Familiarise yourself with tools and organisations that support online safety. The National College offers online safety guides and webinars which provide tips on staying safe. Websites like Report Harmful Content and CEOP can be used to report when something goes wrong. Show children how to report or block users, and where to go if they feel unsafe. Make sure they know that asking for help is always the right thing to do, and be prepared to support them.

Meet Our Expert

Home to the world's largest CPD library for educators, The National College has transformed the way education establishments go about developing their workforce and managing compliance. Our three memberships help all phases and types of setting raise standards, save time, reduce risk, and build a culture of improvement.

See full reference list on our website

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about ONLINE GROOMING

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Online grooming is when someone builds a relationship with a child or young person online to gain their trust for the purpose of sexual abuse, exploitation, radicalisation, or criminal activity – such as county lines or financial scams. According to the NSPCC, police in the UK recorded over 7,000 offences involving sexual communication with a child in a single year – an increase of 89% since 2017/18.

STRANGERS USING FAKE IDENTITIES

Groomers often pose as children or teenagers online to build trust. They may create convincing fake profiles, share photos stolen from real people, or mimic the interests of the child. By pretending to be someone their age, they make conversations feel safe and relatable. Over time, they may ask for personal details, photos, or suggest meeting in person, exposing children to significant emotional and physical harm.

EXPLOITATION THROUGH GIFTS AND FLATTERY

To gain trust quickly, groomers often send gifts, gaming credits, or money. Alongside material offerings, they use excessive compliments, affection, and attention to create emotional dependency. These tactics make children feel valued and special, lowering their defences. Once trust is secured, groomers may escalate their requests, often asking for photos or private conversations, making the child feel pressured or indebted to continue.

GROUP CHATS AS HIDDEN PATHWAYS

Unmonitored group chats on platforms like WhatsApp or Discord provide a cover for groomers. They can watch how children interact, identify those who seem vulnerable, and then move conversations into private messaging. This transition makes detection difficult for trusted adults. The seemingly harmless group setting often masks the presence of predators, giving children a false sense of security.

THE RISE OF SEXTORTION

Sextortion involves pressuring children into sharing explicit content, then blackmailing them for more. Offenders may claim to have hacked a child's device, threaten to share images with friends or family, or demand money. Many victims remain silent out of fear and shame. This growing crime is particularly dangerous because children often feel trapped, believing there's no safe way to escape the situation.

GAMING PLATFORMS AS GROOMING GATEWAYS

Games like Roblox, Fortnite, or Call of Duty, which include live chat features, are frequent targets for groomers. Conversations often begin casually during gameplay and can become manipulative over time. Groomers may offer in-game gifts, credits, or exclusive add-ons to build rapport. Children using headsets or private chat features are especially at risk, as conversations are harder for adults to monitor.

CRIMINAL & RADICALISATION RISKS

Grooming is not always sexual. Some offenders manipulate children into criminal activities such as drug running or online fraud. Others attempt to radicalise young people with extreme ideologies. Groomers often use fear, money, shame, or promises of belonging to control their victims. These forms of exploitation can be just as harmful as sexual grooming, and often leave lasting psychological and social consequences.

Advice for Parents & Educators

KEEP CONVERSATIONS REGULAR

Rather than having one "big talk" about online safety, weave conversations into everyday life. Ask questions about children's online friendships and interests. Share real-life examples to make discussions relatable and encourage honesty instead of secrecy. When children feel comfortable discussing their digital lives, they are far more likely to share concerns or admit when something feels wrong, reducing the chance of risky interactions going unnoticed.

CREATE A "TELL ME" CULTURE

Children often keep silent because they fear being punished or losing access to their devices. Reassure them that coming forward with concerns won't get them into trouble. Emphasise that you are there to help, not judge. Creating a safe, open environment encourages children to speak up if something feels wrong, and helps to ensure they don't suffer in silence when facing potential grooming risks.

UNDERSTAND THE PLATFORMS CHILDREN USE

Take time to learn about the apps, games, and social platforms children are on. Familiarise yourself with privacy settings, parental controls, and group chat features. Use resources like The National College guides or conduct quick searches to stay updated. By understanding how these platforms operate, you'll be better equipped to set boundaries, guide safe use, and notice any unusual or concerning online behaviour early.

STAY ALERT TO WARNING SIGNS

Be attentive to both behavioural and digital red flags. Sudden secrecy, mood swings, or new online contacts may signal a problem. Watch for unexplained gifts, new social media profiles, or changes in sleep patterns. Increased anxiety or reluctance to attend school can also be indicators. Regularly checking in and showing interest in those whom they communicate with online help prevent small issues from escalating into serious risks.

Meet Our Expert

Staffordshire Police is dedicated to keeping people safe and tackling crime across both the physical and digital world. The force continues to strengthen its digital investigation and safeguarding capabilities to protect children and vulnerable people online, working in partnership with local, regional and national organisations, schools, and the wider community.



The National College®

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