

# Safeguarding & Online Safety

Advice for parents and carers

## Meet the team

### Designated Safeguarding Leads:

Natasha England  
Oliver Maund

### Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads:

Jacob McKay – Education Social Worker  
Coralie Crisell

### Main email address for the safeguarding team:

[safeguarding@avonbourneacademy.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@avonbourneacademy.org.uk)

### Designated Teacher for Looked After Children:

Natasha England  
[natasha.England@avonbourneacademy.org.uk](mailto:natasha.England@avonbourneacademy.org.uk)

## Talking to strangers online

There are many apps/websites where your child may come across strangers contacting them. Some platforms will allow you to set who can contact your child as well as switch off communication so ensure appropriate settings are explored and set up. This article from ThinkUKnow talks about how to protect your child from adult content and contact:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Concerned-about-yourchild/Online-contact-and-stayingsafe>

## Talking about online toxicity

Vodafone have published an article highlighting research which shows that “69% of preadolescent boys have encountered misogynistic content online”. This article discusses how to approach this issue with your child and what to do if they start repeating negative views seen online.

<https://www.vodafone.co.uk/newscentre/smart-living/digital-parenting/how-to-talk-to-your-teenage-sons-about-online-toxicity>

## Is being online affecting your child’s mental health?

There are many positives to being online, but we do need to be aware of the negative aspects including those that may impact our child’s mental health and wellbeing, for example:

- Social media (spending too much time on social media, comparing ourselves to others, filtered images and desire to achieve likes).
- Cyberbullying
- Seeing inappropriate content
- Constantly connected/information overload
- Excessive screentime
- Negative impact on our sleep

### Further information

- Childnet discusses digital wellbeing in more detail and includes top tips and conversation starters: <https://www.childnet.com/help-andadvice/digital-wellbeing/>
- The NSPCC provides further information about mental health including signs to look out for and how to get further support: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mentalhealth/depression-anxiety-mental-health>

## TikTok

**You must be over 13 years of age to use TikTok.**

TikTok is a social media platform for sharing and watching short video clips. Some of the videos may not be appropriate for your child to view and there is also the risk of strangers contacting your child. If your child is using TikTok then make sure appropriate security/privacy settings are applied.

### Account set up

As always, it is important that when setting up an account, your child enters their real date of birth as accounts are tailored by age e.g., direct Messaging is disabled for accounts aged 13-15. In addition, advertisements are tailored to their age. By default, accounts for people under 16 are set to private and we would recommend keeping it as this. This means your child must approve follower requests. You can read more about the other settings available, such as switching off comments and switching on restricted mode here: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings>

### Family Pairing

This allows you to link your own account to your child's account. You can then set controls such as restricted mode. You can find out more here:

<https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en/guardians-guide/>

### Inappropriate content, themes and challenges on TikTok

Whilst against TikTok's guidelines, explicit and inappropriate content can be found on this platform, for example nudity/sexual content and hate speech. We often see viral challenges on social media, some of which can be dangerous. If your child is using TikTok, chat to them regularly about what they are viewing.

### Trends and Influencers

We often see trends on social media, for example a latest trend found is around skin care routines, which can lead to children purchasing products that are completely unsuitable/dangerous for their skin. You can find out more here: <https://www.bark.us/blog/skin-care-tweens/>

Influencers are people who have a large following on social media who through recommendations and promotions, influence the behaviour or buying habits of others. The NSPCC discuss what we need to be aware of here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/2023-05-16-the-influence-of-influencers/>

### Stranger contact

Talk to your child about who is following them online and ensure that they understand that people may not be who they say they are when online. It is important that children know not to share personal information.

### Blocking and Reporting

Ensure your child knows how to use the safety features available to them, including how to report comments, direct messages and another user.

Further information

- <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/tiktok>

### Exam Anxiety and Revision Support

The Mental Health Schools Team have put together some resources to support young people around looking after themselves and top tips for successful revision.

[https://mcusercontent.com/a8a5b42a486fe4c6b83f98b58/files/6dcbf9a8-80a3-b1f5-7065-7bc4881ee1f3/How to stay resilient during exam season.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/a8a5b42a486fe4c6b83f98b58/files/6dcbf9a8-80a3-b1f5-7065-7bc4881ee1f3/How_to_stay_resilient_during_exam_season.pdf)

[https://mcusercontent.com/a8a5b42a486fe4c6b83f98b58/files/e514e6ac-c3d1-24ce-c399-9a12e783fa94/Ultimate Revision Guide 3 .01.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/a8a5b42a486fe4c6b83f98b58/files/e514e6ac-c3d1-24ce-c399-9a12e783fa94/Ultimate_Revision_Guide_3_.01.pdf)

### BCP's Knife Crime Awareness Campaign

This campaign seeks to highlight the importance of awareness and education about knife crime, as well as empowering parents and young people to have proactive conversations to reduce the risk of knives.

On 15<sup>th</sup> June a final event is due to take place in Bournemouth. In Bournemouth Town Centre Square and Gardens, between 11am and 4pm, there will closing events activities, including live performance.

The Ben Kinsella Trust's week of action also takes place between 20<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

<https://www.knifecrimeawarenessweek.org.uk/>



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# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about CLICKBAIT

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Clickbait is a controversial online marketing strategy which uses sensationalist (and frequently misleading) headlines to encourage engagement with an article, image or video – often playing on users' emotions and curiosity, while much of the actual content is of questionable accuracy. Clickbait is also sometimes used to disguise scams, phishing sites and malware.

### HARMFUL MISINFORMATION

Clickbait tends to play fast and loose with the truth, opting for eye-catching content over objectivity. This is particularly dangerous for younger internet users, who are generally more susceptible to that type of material. A child could be presented with fake news, misleading articles and – in some cases – outright lies without fully understanding what they're viewing and why it's harmful.

### INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Due to the misleading nature of many examples of clickbait, what may seem to be innocuous and child friendly could actually contain age-inappropriate material such as extremist political views or violent, pornographic or sexually explicit content. This is clearly a hazard for young people, who could be upset, disturbed or influenced by exposure to such subject matter.

### HIDDEN MALWARE

While most clickbait is simply trying to promote engagement to earn companies additional revenue, some of it does redirect to dubious sites with the potential to infect devices with viruses or malware. This could put a child's sensitive data – such as their name, their location and their date of birth – at risk of being accessed and exploited by malicious hackers.

### PRIVACY PROBLEMS

Some clickbait leads to sites which could coax a child into volunteering their personal data – using pop-ups to ask them for their email address and phone number, for example, in exchange for accessing additional content or subscribing to various services. Normally, this harvested information is then sold to third parties, who often utilise it for targeted adverts and other sales schemes.

### A DRAINING DISTRACTION

Clickbait encourages spiralling consumption of online content, which could easily result in a young person spending hours scrolling aimlessly instead of doing something productive or interacting with family and friends. This can leave them tired, social and lacking focus – and, in the long term, can negatively impact their social skills, education and mental wellbeing.

### IMPACT ON BEHAVIOUR

Depending on the type of clickbait a child is interacting with, you might notice negative changes in their behaviour. Weight loss scams, for example, are common among clickbait and have the potential to influence eating habits and body image – while deliberately inflammatory 'rage bait' articles can leave impressionable young people feeling irritable, restless or argumentative.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### START A CONVERSATION

The sheer volume of clickbait can make protecting children against it quite challenging. It's vital to talk to young people regularly about the types of content they encounter online, so that they understand the risks of engaging with clickbait. If you're still concerned, it may also be wise to keep an eye on children's online activity to ensure they're not being tempted by clickbait headlines.

### PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING

Encouraging children to question the legitimacy of sensational headlines and too-good-to-be-true promises will help them to become savvier online – and far less likely to be drawn in by clickbait content. These critical thinking skills will also serve to protect them in other areas of the digital world where misinformation is becoming increasingly common.

### SPOT THE TELLTALE SIGNS

There are certain common elements in clickbait, including headlines and images that use shock and outrage to grab people's attention – as well as numbered lists, such as "8 Facts You Won't Believe Are True". Some clickbait combines several of these tactics to snag users' interest. Learn to recognise these techniques for yourself so you can teach children to notice them as well.

### TAKE CONTROL

Many parents opt to place limits on how long their children can spend online each day, which obviously reduces the chance of exposure to clickbait. Alternatively, most internet-enabled devices have built-in controls that allow parents to manage what sort of online content their child can access – including filtering by age, which can screen out a percentage of inappropriate material.

### Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology writer with more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid *The Inquirer*, she is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant who writes for *Forbes*, *TechRadar* and *Wired*, among others.

