

SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026

WELCOME

Dear parents and carers, welcome to the Parent Safeguarding newsletter. We hope that you find the information included in this newsletter useful. Should you require any further information, please speak to our very friendly safeguarding team.

Aims:

This safeguarding newsletter is aimed to enhance parental vigilance concerning child safety. It seeks to provide essential information on recognising signs of potential harm, particularly amidst the rising concerns of online abuse. Our goal is to empower parents and carers with knowledge and strategies for safeguarding children effectively, and knowing where to find help and support should it ever be needed.

SAFEGUARDING TOPICS COVERED IN SCHOOL THIS MONTH:

- Healthy Me
- Challenging Stereotypes
- Vaping and Smoking*
- Drug and Alcohol Misuse*
- Online Challenges

Our objective is to explore a diverse range of Safeguarding topics each month through various channels, including: whole school and class assemblies; PSHE and RSE curriculum; computing lessons in conjunction with our Digital Leaders; School Council and through consistent signage and posters displayed around the school.

*Please note that challenging topics are always taught sensitively at an age-appropriate level.

Our Safeguarding Team



Mrs Shepherd
Designated
Safeguarding
Lead



Mrs Kinder
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead



Ms Nicholson
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead

If you have an urgent concern out of school hours, you can contact the safeguarding team by emailing safeguarding@redwood.derby.sch.uk

CONCERNED ABOUT A CHILD'S WELFARE?

Do you know what to do if you are ever concerned about the welfare of a child who is not your own? This could be a neighbour, someone in the community, a friend, or even a relative. Speaking out is not 'telling tales' when a child's well-being may be at risk. You can even make referrals anonymously.

You do not need to know everything about the child and what is happening; you may just be worried, or feel that everything is not right.

If you believe that a child is at immediate risk and in need of protection then you should call the police on 999 immediately.

If you know which school the child attends, you can speak to Designated Safeguarding Lead or Head Teacher of the school.

Alternatively, Derby City Children's social care and the First Contact team will help you to talk about the concerns you may have for a child and decide what actions may be required to make a child safe.

You can contact them Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5pm. Telephone: [01332 641172](tel:01332641172) or fax 01332 643299.

VAPING & SMOKING



As children grow, their natural curiosity and the influence of peer pressure can lead them to explore vaping and smoking. It is essential for parents to educate their children about the potential health dangers associated with these behaviours, fostering open discussions that empower them to make informed choices.

Facts to tell young people about vaping:

- Vaping exposes users to some toxins, and we do not yet know what the risks might be in the longer term.
- Most vapes contain nicotine, which is an addictive substance that can be hard to stop using once you have started.
- Nicotine is more risky for young people than for adults, as evidence suggests the developing brain is more sensitive to its addictive effects.
- In the UK, it is against the law to sell nicotine vaping products to under-18s or for adults to buy them on their behalf.
- It's now illegal for disposable vapes to be sold or supplied in the UK.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS VAPING/SMOKING?

Your child will need your help and support to quit. Help them find the motivation to stop vaping. You might want to talk about:

- wanting to be the best, healthiest version of themselves
- not wanting to be addicted
- avoiding health effects including impotence and decreased sports performance
- not wanting to increase anxiety or depression
- saving money
- going against advertising that targets young people



Signs of vaping include:

- new health issues such as coughing or wheezing
- e-cigarette supplies, like cartridges or other suspicious looking items
- new smells (some flavored e-cigarettes have been banned, but many remain on the market – so parents might notice fruity or sweet scents)



ONLINE CHALLENGES

VS

In recent weeks, schools across the country have become aware of a concerning trend circulating among young people online, often referred to as the “Red vs Blue” school challenge. While details may vary between schools or communities, the core idea involves students identifying with one of two “sides” and participating in escalating dares, pranks, or confrontations against those on the opposing side.

What may begin as seemingly harmless competition can quickly turn into behaviour that puts students at risk. Reports linked to similar trends have included bullying, intimidation, property damage, and in some cases organised fights or coordinated disruptions during the school day. Because these challenges often spread through social media platforms, messaging apps, and gaming communities, they can gain momentum quickly and involve students from multiple schools.

For parents, understanding how these trends work is the first step toward helping keep children safe.

Signs Your Child Might Be Involved

Parents should be aware of behavioural changes or signals that may indicate a child is aware of or participating in these types of challenges. Possible signs include:

- Talking about “teams,” “sides,” or upcoming school confrontations
- Wearing or displaying specific colours associated with a group
- Increased secrecy around phones or social media
- Sudden changes in friend groups or online communities
- Anxiety about attending school on particular days
- Unexplained injuries or involvement in conflicts with other students

It is important to remember that many children may simply be aware of the trend without actively participating. Open communication can help clarify what is happening.

What to Do If You Are Concerned

If you believe your child may be involved in a risky challenge:

- Stay calm and avoid immediate punishment while gathering information
- Ask open questions about what has happened and who is involved
- Contact your child’s school if there are safety concerns
- Encourage your child to disengage from any online groups promoting harmful behaviour

Schools and families work best when they support each other. Sharing concerns early can help prevent situations from escalating and ensure all students feel safe at school.

If you believe any child is in immediate danger, contact 999 without hesitation.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about VIOLENT CONTENT ONLINE

Around 70% of teenagers say they've seen real-life violence on social media in the past year – often from as young as primary school age. Just 6% actively seek it out; most encounter it through group chats or social media algorithms. From fights and pranks to hate speech and graphic media, exposure to violent content online is more widespread – and more harmful – than many adults realise.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

MENTAL HEALTH AND TRAUMA

Children and young people report feelings of anxiety, guilt, shame or fear after seeing violent content. For some, these effects may be short term, but for those with existing vulnerabilities or past trauma, the impact can be more severe. Many also feel pressured to 'laugh off' violent content to fit in with friends, even when they find it distressing.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGES

Exposure to online violence can lead to fear and avoidance behaviours – such as skipping school or staying indoors. When children see weapons used in videos, it can heighten their perception that the world is unsafe and, in rare cases, increase the likelihood they'll consider carrying a weapon themselves, such as a knife for protection.

ESCALATION AND PARTICIPATION

Violent videos often go viral quickly. What begins as an online argument can spill into real-world fights – which are sometimes filmed and shared to gain views or status. Some children even admit to sharing or creating violent content themselves to gain attention or boost their reputation.

DESENSITISATION

Older teens may become numb to violent content after years of exposure, admitting they're unlikely to report it. Younger children also tend not to report it – usually because they don't believe anything will be done or because they're afraid of being labelled a 'snitch' by their peers.

HARMFUL IDEOLOGIES

Violent content online may overlap with racist, misogynistic or otherwise extremist ideas. These messages can dehumanise others or glorify violence as a way to gain power, popularity or notoriety. Over time, this can normalise dangerous behaviours and attitudes among impressionable viewers.

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT

Not all children are affected equally. Those who are excluded from school, marginalised, disabled or neurodivergent are often more vulnerable to the effects of online violence. It's essential to consider wider context – including home life and access to safe spaces – when thinking about potential harm.

Advice for Parents & Educators

CREATE SUPPORTIVE SPACES

Many children feel adults are too busy or won't understand their experiences online. Take time to build trust through non-judgemental conversations about what they're seeing. If they don't want to speak to you directly, gently signpost towards trusted services they can turn to for support.

KNOW WHAT'S ILLEGAL

Some violent content is simply upsetting, while other examples may be criminal or a safeguarding matter that needs reporting. Help children understand the difference by staying informed about online laws and social media reporting procedures. A useful resource is reportharmfulcontent.com.

AVOID HARSH RESTRICTIONS

Fear of punishment is a major reason young people stay silent about violent content. Try not to overreact or threaten to take away devices. Instead, reassure children that they can speak openly and that asking for help won't get them into trouble.

UNDERSTAND TECH AND TRAUMA

Older children may already know how to block accounts or avoid triggering content. Help younger or more vulnerable children learn these tools and encourage habits that reduce exposure. Just as importantly, teach techniques that help them process distress – building resilience and emotional literacy for both online and offline life.

Meet Our Expert

Dr. Holly Powell-Jones is the founder of Online Media Law UK and a leading UK expert in digital safety, media law, and young people. Her PhD investigates children's understandings of risk online. She works with schools, businesses, and universities to provide award-winning education on the criminal, legal, and ethical considerations for the digital age. Visit onlinemedialawuk.com for more.



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