SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

Primary | April 2026. In this issue: Navigating the news online | Delaying social media

Talking to children about what's happening in the world

Many of the events happening around the world are discussed frequently in the news and on social media. Even if adults try to shield children from it, they often pick up snippets of conversations, headlines or comments from other children. Because of this, children may already have partial information, misunderstandings or worries that they have not shared.

For primary-aged children, it is usually better that the trusted adults in their lives help them make sense of what they are hearing. When parents and carers talk openly and calmly about world events, it helps children feel safe, supported and able to ask questions.
The goal is not to give lots of detail or expose children to distressing information. Instead, it is about helping them understand the basics, reassuring them that they are safe and reminding them that many people are working hard to help.

HOW PARENTS AND CARERS CAN APPROACH THE CONVERSATION

START BY LISTENING

Ask what your child has already heard.
This helps you understand their level of knowledge and whether they are worried about something specific.

KEEP EXPLANATIONS SIMPLE AND FACTUAL

Use clear language and avoid too many details.
Answer the question they asked rather than giving long explanations.

OFFER REASSURANCE

Remind children that they are safe and that many adults, leaders, helpers and communities are working to solve problems and keep people safe.

FOCUS ON HELPERS AND POSITIVE ACTIONS

Children find comfort in knowing that people help each other in difficult situations.

FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD

Some children will want to ask lots of questions; others may only want a brief explanation.
Both responses are normal.

CONVERSATION STARTERS YOU COULD USE

Parents/carers sometimes find it difficult to know how to begin these discussions.
The following questions and sentence starters can help open the door:

1. "Have you heard anyone talking about what's happening in the news lately?"
2. "What have you heard about what's going on in the world at the moment?"
3. "How did that make you feel when you heard about it?"
   "Do you have any questions about it?"
4. "Sometimes the news can sound a bit scary. If you ever hear something that worries you, you can always talk to me about it."
5. "There are lots of people working very hard to help others and make things better."

Why these conversations matter

Talking about world events in a calm and supportive way can help children to:

- feel safe and reassured by hearing information from a trusted adult
- correct misunderstandings they may have picked up from others
- develop emotional awareness by talking about feelings and worries
- build resilience and empathy by learning how people help each other during difficult times.

When children are not given opportunities to talk, they sometimes fill in the gaps with their imagination, which can make things feel scarier than they really are.

Top tip: Use child-friendly news

- If your child is interested in finding out more, it can help to use news sources designed specifically for children. Programmes such as BBC Newsround explain current events in a clear, age-appropriate way that avoids unnecessary distress.

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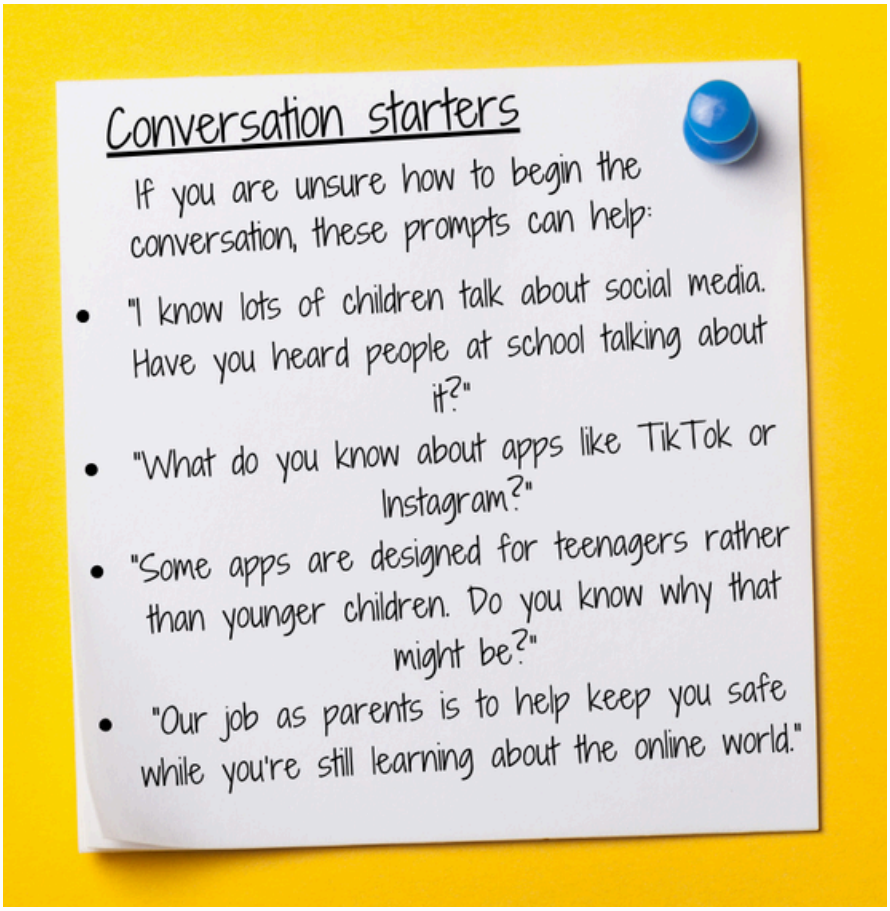
Why social media isn't appropriate for primary-aged children

Many children become curious about social media while they are still in primary school. They may hear friends talking about it, see older siblings using it or ask for accounts themselves. While this curiosity is completely natural, most social media platforms are designed for teenagers and adults, not younger children.

Popular social media platforms, such as **TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube,** set a minimum age of 13 for creating an account. These limits are largely linked to online data and advertising regulations rather than a guarantee that the platforms are suitable for young children and teenagers.

In reality, many of the conversations, videos and images shared on these platforms are created by and for older teenagers and adults. This means children may easily come across content, language or ideas that are confusing, upsetting or simply not appropriate for their age. Even for children who are 13 or older, these platforms often require careful guidance and supervision from adults.

For younger children in primary school, social media can therefore expose them to online spaces that they are not yet ready to manage safely or confidently.



Why waiting matters

Choosing to delay social media use can help children in several important ways.

Protecting emotional wellbeing

Social media often includes comments, likes and comparisons that can affect children's confidence and self-esteem.

Reducing exposure to unsuitable content

Even with filters and controls, children may come across upsetting, confusing or inappropriate material.

Supporting healthy friendships

Children benefit most from learning social skills through face-to-face interaction, play and real-world experiences.

Helping children build digital skills gradually

As children grow older, they develop stronger judgement, critical thinking and resilience that help them manage online environments safely.