



Online Safety Newsletter

Scotts Primary School

Spring 2
March 2026

Welcome to this half-term's online safety newsletter.

This half-term's online safety learning focus has been online bullying, in addition to learning about copyright in Year 5 and 6 computing.

Do get in touch if you need any advice or have any questions relating to your child's online safety.

Have a good Easter break.

Ms Uppal & Miss Batchelor

Stop, Block, Screenshot & Exit

Group chats are a normal part of many children's social lives. Whilst they can be fun, practical and a way to stay connected outside school, sadly they can also be where unkind comments, peer pressure or misunderstandings happen quickly. The poster on the final page of this newsletter can help start a conversation about how we treat each other in group chats and gives children four practical steps they can take: **Stop, Block, Screenshot and Exit.**



Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)

What is a VPN?

VPNs are software applications used to connect to the internet more securely. Using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) helps make your connection between a device and the internet more secure and can protect personal information and increase privacy, particularly when using public Wi-Fi.



Research on increased use of VPNs

Recent [research from Childnet](#) explains that despite headlines suggesting a rise in VPN use after new age verification rules were introduced last year, this increase is not mainly driven by children. The research also highlights that when children do use VPNs it is usually for reasons such as privacy or accessing entertainment content rather than to bypass restrictions.

The *Childnet* survey included responses from over 2,000 children aged 8 to 17 and 2,000 parents and carers. Just over 1 in 5 children aged 8 to 17 reported using a VPN. Around 23% of parents believe their child has used one which is similar to children's responses. Usage increases with age and is higher among boys than girls. Only a small proportion of children reported using VPNs to access age restricted material.

What do parents need to be aware of VPNs?

While a VPN has benefits, it is important that parents understand the risks. If a child is using a VPN they may be able to bypass Wi-Fi restrictions, access blocked websites and get around parental controls. It may also mean their browsing history is hidden.

Childnet advises that while there is no evidence of a major shift in behaviour, it remains important for parents and schools to support children to use the internet safely and stay aware of how technology is being used.

Further information:

- The *NSPCC* and *Internet Matters* provides a helpful overview of VPNs, plus top tips and conversation starters here:
 - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/vpns-and-online-safety/>
 - <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/managing-vpns-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers/>
- Childnet Research:
 - <https://www.childnet.com/blog/new-research-from-childnet-shows-that-the-surge-in-vpn-use-following-the-introduction-of-age-verification-in-the-summer-is-not-attributable-to-children/>

WhatsApp Updates - Managed Accounts



WhatsApp has been a significant concern for many schools, particularly chat groups where predominantly low level issues suddenly escalate. This month, WhatsApp announced that children under 13 can now use WhatsApp, but only via 'Parent-Managed Accounts'.

Essentially these are accounts set up by the parent on the child's device, but managed from the parent's device. As well as no access to artificial intelligence (AI) within WhatsApp and no ads, there are parent management features which include:

- **Contact management** - parents can choose who can contact their child and which chat groups they can join. Children cannot join groups without a parent's approval. Messages from unknown contacts are sent to the parent first for approval.
- **Activity notifications** - parents can view their child's activity, such as when a child adds a new contact or if disappearing messages are turned on. Parents will also be notified if their child blocks or reports a contact.

For further information and set-up guidance:

- <https://blog.whatsapp.com/introducing-parent-managed-accounts-on-whatsapp>
- https://faq.whatsapp.com/875902238256170/?cms_platform=android

YouTube Shorts – Parental Controls

YouTube have published their latest update on how parents can support their child on the platform. YouTube will now allow parents to set the amount of time viewing 'Shorts' – this can even be set to zero. YouTube 'Shorts' are short videos, usually less than 60 seconds long, which when continuously watched, can lead to excessive screentime. Furthermore, parents will also be able to set bedtime and 'take a break' reminders.

You can find out more about these controls here:
<https://blog.youtube/news-andevents/updates-youtube-supervisedaccounts-teens/>

If you would like to find out more about supervised accounts on YouTube, then this article explains the different settings available:

<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/10314940?sjid=12815225951133788374-EU>

New Government Online Safety Campaign

The government have launched a new campaign providing guidance to parents on safety settings, conversation prompts and advice for tackling misinformation, harmful and toxic online content.

The site also includes [a quiz](#) to help you and your child spot misleading or unreliable information online.

You can find out more here:

<https://kidsonlinesafety.campaign.gov.uk/>

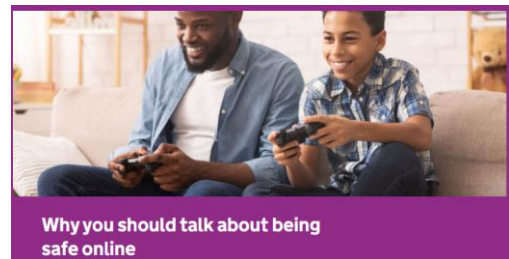








Image source: <https://kidsonlinesafety.campaign.gov.uk>

Quick Links

<u>Parental Controls</u>	<u>Digital Wellbeing</u>	<u>PEGI Age Ratings</u>	<u>Harmful Content</u>	<u>Commonsense Media</u>	<u>Social Media</u>
					

Stop, Block, Screenshot & Exit

IF YOU SEE UNKIND MESSAGES OR BULLYING IN A GROUP CHAT YOU CAN...



STOP

Don't reply. If the unkind messages are about someone else, don't join in. If you respond, sometimes it can make it worse. When you stop, it allows you time to make a better choice.

If you receive unkind or unwanted messages you can block the person who is sending them.

When you block someone, this stops them from sending you any more messages.

BLOCK

SCREENSHOT

You can take a screenshot of the unkind messages in the group chat and show it to a trusted adult.

If anything happens in a group chat that you feel worried about, you can take a screenshot and talk to a trusted adult about it.

If you're in a group chat and other people are sending unkind messages, or saying things that you don't like, you can make the choice to exit the group.

EXIT