



**If you have any concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or a family, please  
contact us.**

**OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFEGUARDING & DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD**

**(DSL) – MRS HEATH, HEADTEACHER**

**DEPUTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD -MISS NOLAN, DEPUTY HEADTEACHER**

**FGM HELPLINE 0800 028 355**

**PREVENT HELPLINE 020 7340 7264**



**Mrs I Heath**



**Miss B Nolan**

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we move through the month of February, we continue to place the safety and wellbeing of every child at the centre of school life, guided by our Catholic values of love, respect, and care for one another. Each child is a precious gift from God, and safeguarding remains a fundamental part of how we nurture, protect, and support them within our school community.

This month, pupils will be taking part in age-appropriate safeguarding reminders, including revisiting trusted adults in school and understanding how to speak out if something does not feel right. As we approach the half-term break, we will also be reminding children about staying safe online and in the community, reinforcing key messages about personal safety and respectful behaviour.

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility between home and school, and we thank you for your continued support and partnership. Through this newsletter, we will share key updates, guidance, and reminders to help keep our children safe during February and beyond.

***We live to love, learn and respect and follow Jesus who says, "Love one another as I have loved you."***

**SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING***Working together to keep our young people safe***Children's Mental Health Week**

This year's **Children's Mental Health Week is 9-15 February**, the theme is 'This Is My Place'. For young children, feeling that they belong is not just about happiness - it is about feeling safe, protected and valued. When children know they have trusted adults, predictable routines and spaces where they feel listened to, it supports their mental health and helps keep them safe. A strong sense of belonging helps children feel confident to speak up, ask for help and share worries before they become overwhelming. Children who feel secure in their relationships at home and school are better able to manage emotions, build healthy friendships and cope with challenges. Feeling included and accepted also reduces vulnerability, as children are more likely to seek support if something does not feel right.

**Support for children and families**

If you ever have concerns about your child's emotional wellbeing or need advice or support, the following organisations offer trusted guidance for parents and children:

**Place2Be**

- Provides mental health support in schools and practical advice for parents on children's emotional wellbeing.

**YoungMinds**

- Offers a dedicated Parents' Helpline, resources on children's mental health and guidance on supporting children through worries, anxiety and big emotions.

**NSPCC**

- Provides advice and support around safeguarding, keeping children safe and what to do if you're worried about a child.

**Anna Freud Centre**

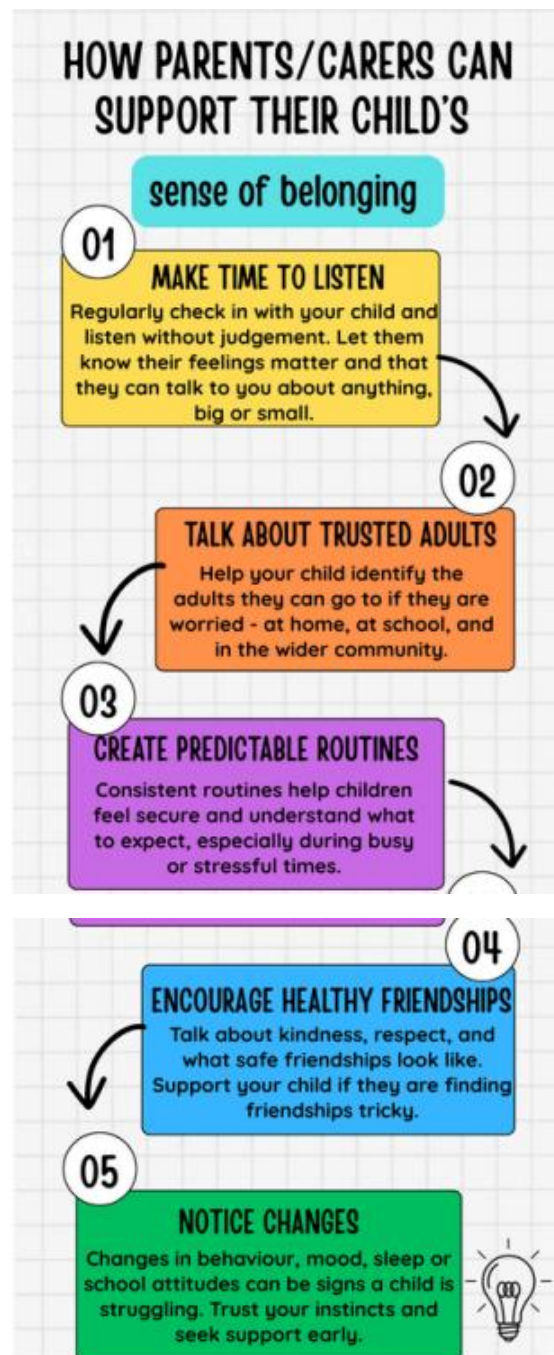
- Shares evidence-based resources to help parents understand and support children's mental and emotional development.

**Childline**

- A free, confidential service for children and young people who need someone to talk to. It can be reassuring for children to know support is available beyond home and school.

In this issue:

- Children's Mental Health Week
- Safer Internet Day



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**Safer Internet Day: Smart Tech, Safe Choices**

This year's Safer Internet Day is **10 February** and the theme is '**Smart Tech, Safe Choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI.**' As technology becomes an everyday part of children's lives, it is important that we help them use it safely, responsibly and with confidence.

Many primary-age children already interact with technology that uses artificial intelligence (AI), such as voice assistants, games, learning apps and online content recommendations. These tools can support learning, creativity and curiosity when used appropriately and with adult guidance. However, while AI can be helpful and engaging, it also presents risks that young children may not recognise.

AI tools can sometimes provide inaccurate information, expose children to unsuitable content, or encourage them to trust what they see and hear too easily. Some platforms collect personal data, blur the line between what is real and computer-generated or present content in ways that feel friendly but are not designed with children's safety in mind.

Without clear guidance, children may struggle to judge what is safe, making adult supervision and open conversations essential. From a safeguarding perspective, supporting children to make safe choices online is just as important as keeping them safe offline. When children feel informed, supervised, and able to talk openly about their online experiences, they are more likely to speak up if something worries them. Helping children understand boundaries, protect personal information and know where to seek help builds confidence and reduces vulnerability.



If you have any concerns about your child's online experiences, please speak to a member of school staff. Working together helps ensure children feel safe, supported and confident to make smart choices online.

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At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit [nationalcollege.com](https://nationalcollege.com).

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about MENTAL HEALTH MISINFORMATION ONLINE

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

A research study by Ofcom revealed that children aged 9-15 increasingly use online platforms like TikTok for mental health advice, with 50% relying on social media for information. Unverified medical content online is concerning, with the potential to cause confusion, anxiety, or incorrect self-diagnoses. This guide provides expert strategies to help parents and educators tackle misinformation effectively and ensure safer digital experiences for young people.

### POPULAR ONLINE SOURCES

Platforms like TikTok and Instagram are two of the main sources of young people's mental health content. Videos and posts frequently feature unqualified influencers, contributing to misinformation, myths, and oversimplifications. While appealing to young audiences, this unverified content can distort perceptions, and create unrealistic expectations and misunderstandings about mental health conditions.

### RISK OF SELF-DIAGNOSIS

Social media's misleading content encourages young people to self-diagnose complex mental health conditions inaccurately. Misdiagnosis can exacerbate anxiety, cause unnecessary worry, or delay essential professional intervention. This has the potential to escalate manageable conditions into more significant mental health issues requiring comprehensive clinical support.

### LACK OF FILTERS

Social media platforms struggle to filter misinformation effectively, allowing false content to spread widely and quickly. Without proper guidance, young viewers may not discern fact from fiction, potentially internalising inaccurate beliefs about mental health. This can negatively influence their decisions about seeking professional help or managing mental wellbeing.

### IMPACTFUL PAST TRENDS

Historically, online mental health misinformation has led to harmful trends, including inappropriate coping strategies or sensationalised symptoms. For example, past TikTok trends on self-harm or anxiety 'hacks' have spread damaging advice, underscoring the risk when misinformation is not promptly addressed or corrected by knowledgeable adults.

### MISLEADING CLINICAL TERMS

Online trends often include the misuse of clinical terms, such as 'trauma' or 'OCD', making serious conditions seem trivial or inaccurately understood. Such misinformation can diminish empathy, and lead young people to misunderstand mental health complexities, potentially preventing them from identifying real mental health issues in themselves or others.

### REPLACING PROFESSIONAL HELP

Frequent reliance on digital content can deter young people from seeking professional mental health care, substituting expert support with unverified online advice. This substitution can prolong issues, complicate recovery, and reduce the effectiveness of future professional interventions, ultimately impacting overall mental health and wellbeing negatively.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### MONITOR ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Regularly review and discuss a young person's online activity, providing appropriate guidance on discerning accurate content. Tools such as parental controls or co-viewing content can help mediate exposure to harmful misinformation, facilitating safer digital habits and informed critical thinking about mental health.

### IDENTIFY RELIABLE SOURCES

Teach young people to critically evaluate mental health content by checking credentials, source authenticity, and evidence-based information. Encourage them to refer to trusted medical or educational platforms and to consult healthcare professionals for clarification. This reduces young people's reliance on potentially harmful or misleading online sources.

### SCHOOL-HOME COLLABORATION

Strengthen collaboration with educators to integrate digital literacy into the school curriculum, emphasising misinformation awareness. Jointly delivered education sessions on identifying and responding to misinformation can significantly improve pupils' ability to critically assess mental health content, supporting their mental wellbeing effectively both online and offline.

### ENCOURAGE OPEN DIALOGUE

Foster a non-judgemental environment where young people feel comfortable discussing online content. Regularly talking about their online experiences and perceived mental health concerns helps clarify misunderstandings, mitigates misinformation, and builds trust, thereby enhancing their resilience and digital literacy. Model situations where you have sought advice from accurate sources and not solely relied on social media for health advice.

### Meet Our Expert

Anna Bateman is Director of Halcyon Education Ltd, Director for Wellbeing and Family Services at Leigh Trust, and lead expert for mental health at The National College. Anna specialises in strategic mental health solutions for schools, supporting educators and families to improve resilience, emotional literacy, and overall wellbeing for children across the UK.



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