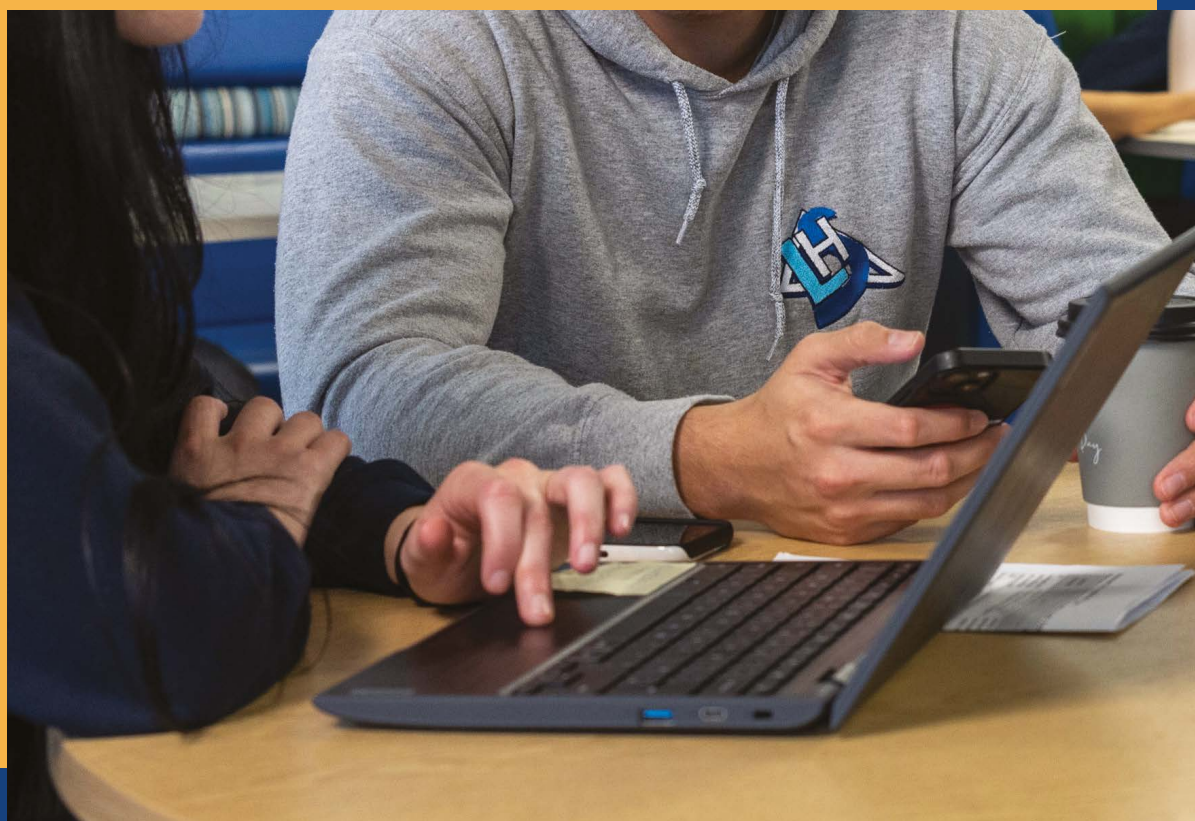


Ysgol Uwchradd
Llanishen
High School



Navigating social media with your children: A parents' guide



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An introduction from our headteacher

In this digital age, where technology and online platforms play a significant role in our daily lives, social media has become almost unavoidable - especially for young people. According to the [latest UK data](#), 91% of 12-15-year-olds and 97% of 16-17-year-olds use social media and in 2019, [the Guardian](#) reported that the average teenager spent one to three hours on social media every day.

At Llanishen High School, 51% of parents said that their teenager checks social media every few hours, while an additional 30% believe it's checked hourly.

For Gen Z (people born between 1996 and 2010) and Gen Alpha (those born during or after 2010), it's second nature, an everyday necessity for checking in with friends, keeping up appearances (and their Snapchat streak) and staying in the loop with the latest trends. So as their online world continues to grow and evolve, parents (and teachers) must equip themselves with the knowledge and tools necessary to ensure their teenagers' safety, well-being, and privacy online. In today's world, key threats include inappropriate content, predators, cyberbullying and more. It's a lot for any parent to navigate, but you don't have to do it alone.

That's why we recently surveyed Llanishen High School parents across all year groups to understand their biggest concerns when it comes to social media, their teenager's social media use, as well as the challenges they face when it comes to addressing issues around social media.

We've taken on board this feedback and in this guide, we'll provide you with practical tips, useful insights, and proactive ways to address key concerns such as staying safe online, maintaining mental health, combating bullying, and safeguarding.

Mrs Sarah Parry
Headteacher

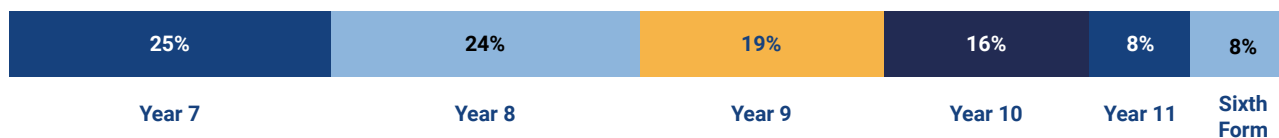


*We've been supported by our marketing agency, Station Rd. in the development of this to ensure we're bringing you the latest advice and essential information.

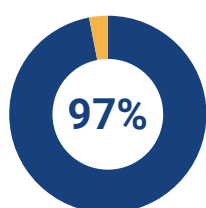
About the report

For this guide, we heard from 339 parents across all year groups, helping us to better understand their key concerns and considerations about their children's social media use.

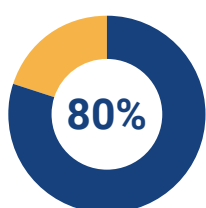
Parent response by year group:



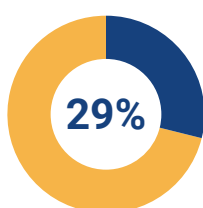
Feedback at a glance:



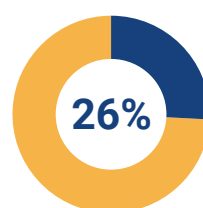
100% of parents surveyed said their children had access to the internet at home, with 97% stating that they check their social media on smartphones



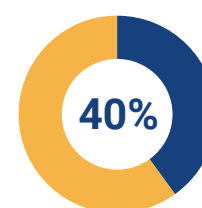
80% believed that social media had a negative impact on mental health - at least sometimes



Mental well-being was the top concern when it comes to social media use (29%)



26% said their child had experienced bullying through social media



40% of parents have had to speak to their teenager about inappropriate posts

Parent response

"As children get older, parents do not have as much access to their phones and grooming is a worrying factor for parents. Children need to be aware of chat rooms, online gaming, and talking to strangers online. As parents, we teach them to be safe online and I'd like to see the school doing the same."

"Any feedback or advice is really appreciated. As a parent, I don't fully understand each of the social media options, and what is appropriate or inappropriate."

"Social media can be used very positively and future jobs may be closely linked to or directly involved in social media. There will even be some jobs we can't imagine will exist yet."

We hope this guide provides some helpful support and advice, and we want this information to be readily available to those who need it. All we ask is that you quote Llanishen High School and this guide whenever you do so.

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Section 1: Staying safe online

Accessing social media has never been easier for teenagers, with 100% of our parents saying that their children have access to the internet at home and 97% stating that their teenagers check social media frequently via their smartphones.

Social media usage:

Channels parents believe their children to be using the most.



It's become a normal part of their everyday lives - not surprising as they're the first generation to have grown up with the internet, social media, and smartphones as the norm. But unfortunately, with that in mind, they may not fully understand the implications of sharing their personal information online, including their live location, and the risks associated with this as it's become so normalised. They may not even understand what you mean when you talk about sharing personal information. It's just a bit of fun, right? Well to them, yes it probably is. But as a parent, it's natural for you to be concerned about their online safety. So here are some things to think about, and some suggestions for tackling key safety issues.

Share but don't overshare

What goes online stays online forever. Even a post which is deleted later, or any disappearing content shared through apps like Snapchat could be quickly screenshotted or recorded. It can seem quite innocent at the time, but posts have been known to come back to cause harm later on. Even some of the world's biggest brands like Pepsi have experienced this, so it's never good to assume that your case will be the exception. You can never be too sure who's on the other end of that profile either, with Instagram reporting an estimated 95 million fake accounts.

With that in mind, we also know that it's now quite common to share a live location on social media especially when out having fun with friends. But this can cause safety issues for your child if you're unsure who's following or watching their account, never mind the 'friends of friends' who might see a post in their feed. For peace of mind, we always recommend turning on privacy settings, especially for your teenagers. This means updating their account so that only people they know, and trust can see their updates as followers would need to be manually accepted, allowing your teen to make the judgement call on who sees their content. You may also want to take this opportunity to remind your teen that the number of followers they have isn't the be-all and end-all.

Starting the conversation with your teenager:

- Think twice before hitting 'post' - do you know that whatever you post online stays online? And how do you feel about that?
- Can you wait until you get home to post your location on apps like Instagram or Facebook?
- When using Snapchat, do you keep your account in 'Ghost Mode' so your live location can be hidden?
- Have you looked at the privacy settings on your social media accounts? Can you talk me through what you've set up?

Set strong passwords

While most websites are secure and social media platforms are starting to introduce two-step verification (meaning that any new logins to a profile will need to be verified by a trusted device, even if they correctly enter the password), it's still important to have a strong password to help reduce any potential risk to an account's security.

How to set a strong password:

- Never use personal information like your name, birthday, pet's name or anything else that might be publicly available
- Use different passwords for all your social media networks
- Include a mix of numbers and symbols as well as uppercase and lowercase letters
- Consider using the strong passwords generated by Apple and Android or a separate password generator - but just make sure to note it down!



Passwords shouldn't be shared so if there's ever any risk that someone may have access to an account, it's worth updating immediately. If you listen to the experts, it's recommended that passwords should be updated every three months, so you might want to keep this in the back of your mind or set a regular reminder to change them.

40%

of parents have needed to speak with their teenager about inappropriate posts.

Identify and avoid malicious content

It may or may not surprise you to hear that 40% of parents have needed to speak with their teenager about inappropriate posts. Whether they're sharing or on the receiving end, malicious content can be classed as something indecent, offensive, threatening or containing false information.

We appreciate that it can be hard to keep track of all the social media accounts now available and 30% of parents told us that they certainly feel this way, with 28% saying that their children didn't want to engage in conversation about social media either. We understand that. Yet, depending on the type of content, if a person is sharing abusive or offensive messages, they could be committing an offence. So, teenagers must be aware of the implications of their actions or understand when they should be reporting certain content.

If you want to help your child avoid inappropriate content, you might want to:

- Speak to them about things to look out for like inappropriate website pop-ups, unfamiliar DMs with links or even profiles that seem inappropriate or fake
- Set up content blockers and firewalls to help block any websites that aren't regarded as safe for your teen
- Speak to your child if they do come across any content that they're uncomfortable with to help them manage their response.

Avoiding online predators

As mentioned a little earlier, there are a huge number of fake accounts live on social media right now, and some of these worryingly belong to online predators. Anyone that uses the internet to entice children for sexual or abusive exploitation would be considered an online predator, and victims can be anywhere between 1-17 years old. Sadly, data from UK police forces have shown that online grooming crimes have [risen by more than 80%](#) in the last four years, taking the total of offences to more than 27,000, with four out of five cases impacting girls (where gender was recorded).

There are typically two main approaches from online predators:

Grooming - this is where someone works to build trust and a relationship with someone with the intention of exploiting them or causing them harm, which could be sexual abuse or obtaining sexually inappropriate images/ videos.

Catfishing - this is where someone creates a fake profile using someone else's name, pictures, and details to create a new identity to deceive someone. This can potentially lead to dangerous situations and very often, people are unaware that this is happening to them.

What warning signs should you look out for?

- They're asking for personal details
- They're offering something that feels too good to be true
- They're acting as an emotional support to gain trust
- They're threatening to share private information
- They're offering a lot of affection and care
- They never want to video chat or talk over the phone
- Their stories don't hold up to questioning.



To help your child stay safe online, we recommend:

- Helping them to identify risky behaviour and how they can report it (whether that's to the platform itself or a trusted adult)
- Warning them about the signs of flirting and setting boundaries if this happens, especially if they're conversing with someone they haven't met in person
- Educating them about the implications of sharing a 'sexy' selfie (and you can refer back to the part where we talk about screenshot culture earlier in this section too)
- Making it clear that they can always talk to you, and you're here to listen, judgement free.

We appreciate that teens like to think that they're socially savvy, but online predators are becoming more sophisticated and manipulative. Plus, the sheer volume of targeting has increased significantly since 2020, so it's a risk to be very aware of.

Don't forget about age restrictions...

Many social media platforms have a minimum age restriction of 13+ to sign up for an account. But it's always worth checking the individual age rating of each app before your child gets started. Regardless of the platform's official advice, don't forget that you know your child best. So, if something doesn't seem suitable for your child currently, don't be afraid to have that conversation with them.



Section 2: Mental health in the digital age

Social media can have a significant impact on mental well-being. From excessive screen time to the pressure to conform to online standards, it can be difficult to navigate. 30% of parents believe social media consistently has a negative impact on their teenager's mental health and a further 50% said that it does sometimes. It's understandable why this is a top concern for parents when it comes to their teen's social media use (29%), so we wanted to share some advice and things to look out for if you're concerned about your child.

29%

of parents said mental health was a top concern when it comes to their child's social media use.

Putting a value on 'likes'

Having likes and followers can make us feel good about ourselves - it's that instant hit of the feel-good hormone, dopamine, and thanks to the gamification of the platforms (the red alert of a notification, that ping every time you get a like, and any other alert that gives you fear of missing out (FOMO) if it's not checked almost immediately) it's easy to get addicted to this feeling. Young people can share their lives, get creative and be heard through social platforms. But alongside those benefits, they may start to feel as though their self-worth or value is directly linked to the number of 'likes' they get on any given day or post. This can create a dependence on the need to feel validated and can lead to a downhill spiral of lower self-worth and greater insecurities.

The most important thing to remember is that you should be controlling social media, it shouldn't be controlling you. If your teen shows signs of increased dependency on this type of validation, encourage them to step away and strike a bit of balance.

You might want to consider asking your child:

- Could they avoid sharing for a few days and engage in more real-world activities?
- Could they hide the likes on their Instagram posts so they're not worried about having this on show to their followers?
- To think about what they're posting and why they're sharing it?

Social media isn't reality

Social media isn't real life. It's more like a highlights reel - you see the good bits or the bits that someone wants you to see. While this can have its benefits and it can be entertaining, on the flip side of the coin, it can have a negative impact on self-esteem if taken at face value.

For example, editing apps like Facetune have grown in popularity and allow people to edit their appearance - from slimming your face or body to smoothing out your skin or brightening your teeth or eyes. There's a chance that the major influencers and celebrities that your teen is following are using these apps (the Kardashians have been called out for this many times), and the original is nothing like the version you see on social media. Social media is very addictive, and the perfection ideal can be hard to break away from.

To help your teen avoid the comparison cycle, here's some advice you might want to share:

- Unfollow accounts that don't make you feel great about yourself
- Find smaller accounts you can relate to and that inspire you (in a good way)
- Share and engage with content that you find encouraging and positive
- Create a feed that feels more like 'you' - if you wouldn't keep the type of people you're following in your close friendship group, then it's time to make a change.

Parent response

"The algorithms that social media platforms use push content onto young people in subtle and manipulative ways. Helping pupils develop critical literacy skills is paramount. Teaching pupils to be critical, thinking individuals is crucial."

Managing screentime

Smart devices are pretty central to a teen's life, but they need to balance screen time to help manage their mental well-being, giving themselves time to self-regulate and reflect. Two-thirds (66%) of parents have already introduced a cut-off time for screen time at home while a further 14% are considering it. While this can be done by simply taking away all devices after a certain time (because we all know how easy it can be for them to keep scrolling late into the night), it may also help to monitor the screen time on devices directly. Your devices give you a breakdown of your daily and weekly screen time, and you can create limits for different apps too. While it's helpful for parents to enforce boundaries, your teenager needs to understand 'why' these screen time restrictions have been introduced so that they can make better choices as they get older.

66%

of parents have introduced
a cut-off for screen time.

How to help your teen manage their screentime:

1. Encourage them to switch off notifications while they're doing activities like homework or while they have dinner with you. It can help them to take more regular breaks and focus on just one activity at a time.
2. Sit down and look at their screen time usage together. Ask them how they feel about the amount of time they're spending on their devices and how they think they could cut it down or even think about what they want to make more time for.
3. Introduce more activities that don't require a device and you might want to even get outdoors when doing so for those additional mental health benefits. Think about hiking, paddleboarding, and swimming. Or if you're staying at home, why not try baking, a board game night or anything else that might capture their attention?
4. Create a routine where you have some tech-free time as a family. It might be the first hour after everyone gets home, while you eat dinner or the last hour before bed. That familiarity may help to reduce any conflict when you ask your teen to put their devices down too.
5. Before you pause their screen time, give them a warning when their time is almost up and ask them to save or finish what they're doing. It feels less abrupt and gives your teen a little more control.



How can social media support mental health?

We've talked a lot about the negatives, but social media can also have a positive impact on mental health too if you can get the right balance. It can help your teen to:

- Connect with other people
- Reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation
- Express themselves
- Get creative
- Hear about other people's experiences
- Find out new information

It can be a worry, but social media doesn't need to be removed completely from their lives unless it's having a detrimental effect. It's all about individual usage and focusing on the ways it can be used for good, but this is always a work in progress.

Section 3: Combatting bullying and harassment

Bullying has sadly extended its reach to social media, and 26% of parents said that their teenager had experienced bullying through social media. It's a concern for 20% of parents as unfortunately, it can be more difficult to spot as it often happens on personal devices anytime, anywhere. So we all must be aware of the risks to help tackle this issue.

Forms of online bullying

Cyberbullying can include nasty messages, posting unwanted things, hacking someone's profile, spreading secrets or rumours, pretending to be someone else, or even posting private/ embarrassing photos of someone online. With the speed of social media today, it can be hard to control the spread of messages, images, and videos shared online, which means that many people can see any unwanted content or pile on which can be hugely overwhelming. While bullying has always been a traumatising experience, for children of previous generations it could be avoided, at least for a few hours, when they returned home from school. But now, it can follow them into the physical and digital parts of their lives. So, it's important to spot it and report it.

26%

of parents said their children had experienced bullying through social media.

Supporting your child

18% of parents are unsure of whether their teenager had experienced bullying through social media. They may not be initially forthcoming about any issues they're going through, which is why it's so important to create a safe, open dialogue where they feel they can come to you with any issues they might be facing.

How to spot the warning signs?

- Physical symptoms including problems eating or sleeping or complaining about headaches or stomach pains
- Behavioural changes including being unusually irritable, anxious, unhappy, teary or even angry
- Avoiding social events that they used to enjoy
- Refusing to go to school or making excuses to skip school.



If your child is experiencing online bullying, encourage them to:

- Save messages or evidence to show you or another trusted adult
- Not respond or rise to the abuse
- Report or block the account
- Tell a trusted teacher and seek support.

Creating a culture of kindness

With so much time spent on social media, it can be mentally tough if all your teen is seeing is trolling, bullying, posts that incite hatred, or just general negativity. But kindness in these situations can never be overestimated and often when one person acts with kindness, others are more likely to follow suit.

We'd like to caveat this by saying that if your child is experiencing bullying, this would probably be the last thing on their mind - we understand you do need to be in the right headspace to act in this way.

Kindness on social media can look like:

- Sharing positive messages whether that's through a post, comments, or DMs
- Being sensitive to others and their feelings before sharing
- Using platforms for creativity and encouraging others to get involved too
- Taking time before reacting to something with negative
- Showing compassion for others.



Reporting online bullying and harassment

As a school, we take bullying very seriously, whether it's done online (using similar tactics to the examples we've mentioned above) or in person. We want to ensure that everyone in our school is treated equally and with respect so that school remains a place where your child can express themselves and be included in a safe and happy environment.

But bullying can only be dealt with and stopped if it is reported to us. So if your child has been affected by bullying by another member of the school community, or has been a witness to someone who has, here's how it can be reported:

How to report online bullying and harassment

- Report to a class teacher, form teacher, Year Team Leader (YTL) or any other teacher
- Report to a member of the Wellbeing Team. They can be found in the Wellbeing Center at the bottom of the Mathematics block
- Report to other school staff including the Youth Mentor, the attendance officer, the school counsellor, reception staff or any other teaching assistants
- This can be done in person, by email, or by posting concerns anonymously in one of the 'Bully Boxes' situated in each block of the school.

Our complete [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) is available on our website if you need more information.



Section 4: Safeguarding privacy in the digital era

Social media raises privacy concerns, and protecting personal information is incredibly important. However, just 13% of parents listed privacy and safety as their top concern when it came to their children's social media usage. In this section, we thought it was essential to explore the importance of privacy settings, teach you how to help your child manage their online presence and provide you with tools to discuss the potential long-term consequences of oversharing personal information online.

58% of parents have set up parental controls on their child's social accounts.

Setting up parental controls

Parental controls can help give you peace of mind that your child is less likely to be exposed to inappropriate posts online. 58% of parents have said that they've already set up parental controls on their child's social accounts while a further 8% reported that they would like to but aren't sure how to.

If you weren't already aware, Apple iOS and iPadOS can filter website content automatically to limit access to adult content in Safari and other apps. You can also add specific websites to an approved or blocked list, or you can limit access to only approved websites for your child.

To do this, follow these steps:

- Go to Settings and tap Screen Time
- Tap Content & Privacy Restrictions and enter your Screen Time password
- Tap Content Restrictions, then click Web Content
- Choose Unrestricted Access, Limit Adult Websites or Allowed Websites
- Depending on the access you want to grant, you may need to add information, such as the website that you want to restrict.

Or if you have an Android device, the steps are similar. Here's what you need to do:

- Open the Google Play app
- Click on the profile icon in the top right corner
- Hit Settings > Family > Parental controls
- Turn on Parental controls
- You can protect your parental controls with a PIN
- Select the type of content you want to filter, including apps and games
- Choose how you filter or restrict access.



Managing an online presence

Having an online presence will undoubtedly impact your teen. For example, employers or even universities may choose to check social media accounts during the recruitment process, and any inappropriate posts may work against an individual when it comes to the final decision-making process. But if done in the right way, it can have the opposite effect. It may show their entrepreneurial spirit, their outgoing personality, or even the extracurricular activities they get involved with.

How to help manage your child's online presence

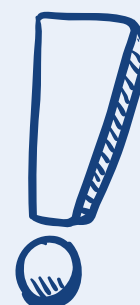
- Do an audit of your teen's social media accounts and how they're representing themselves publicly. Do you think it fairly represents who they are as an individual?
- Help your teen to understand their 'digital footprint' and what this means. Comments, likes, and reshares matter too, not just the content they share to their feed or stories
- Encourage them to be authentic so that their social profiles reflect who they really are
- Set guidelines for do's and don'ts including topics and the types of pictures and videos that should be avoided
- Talk to them about how they want to be seen publicly. What are they striving for? What do they want to be known for? How do they want their community to describe them?

Implications of sharing personal information online

We talked in Section 1 about the dangers of oversharing on social media, but here we want to talk a little bit more about the implications of this. Sharing too much personal information on social media sites can leave you vulnerable to fraud and impersonation, regardless of age.

Sharing some of this key information could put your teen at heightened risk:

- Full name
- Full address
- Date of birth
- Telephone number
- National Insurance number
- School
- Bank account details
- Account information.



It may sound obvious, but having open conversations about the dangers of sharing this information - especially with people they don't know in their DMs - should be a top priority in terms of their online safety.

Section 5: Report summary

Your involvement and understanding of social media can play an important role in safeguarding your child's well-being. We hope that with the help of this guide, you'll feel better prepared to support your child online and promote safe, healthy, and responsible use of social media. But remember, every child is unique, and we completely appreciate that the approach would need to be adapted for individual needs and circumstances. If you would like any additional information or support, please reach out to your child's Year Team Leader.

Section 6: Top tips

Talking to your teen about social media

- Start open conversations - ask them about the apps and websites they're using
- Give them the benefit of the doubt and always ask before telling
- Share your own experiences of social media, how you're using it and what you're seeing on your own feed (where appropriate)
- Reassure them that they can always speak to you, without judgement
- Reinforce the difference between positive and negative online behaviour
- Above all, stay calm, even if you find out something you don't like about your child's social media usage.



Section 7: Helpful resources

There's so much we could have included in this guide for you and your teen, especially as social media is so vast and it's always evolving. But we wanted to focus on top-level advice to help you start some important conversations while also getting a better understanding of some of the challenges your teen may be facing today. If you'd like to do some further reading, there are some helpful resources available via the links below.

Instagram's resource for you and your teen:

<https://about.instagram.com/community/parents#:~:text=Tap%20Settings%2C%20Account%2C%20then%20select,safer%20experience%20for%20young%20people>

Meta safety centre:

<https://about.meta.com/actions/safety/audiences/childsafety/>

A guide to Snapchat for parents:

https://assets.ctfassets.net/gqgsr8avay9x/60HGeq7lGysoFIH8bucYUs/de27693efe8bf9b23cfabc9dd0f12a77/ParentGuide_2021_en_GB.pdf

A Guardian's guide to TikTok:

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

Childline's guide to staying safe online:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/staying-safe-online/#:~:text=Tips%20to%20stay%20safe%20online,-There%20are%20lots&text=Keep%20things%20like%20your>

NSPCC's guide to keeping your child safe online:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>

Advice about key social media platforms and apps:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/social-media-guides#:~:text=To%20be%20eligible%20to%20sign,address%20and%20selecting%20a%20username.>

We hope this guide provides some helpful support and advice, and we want this information to be readily available to those who need it. All we ask is that you quote Llanishen High School and this guide whenever you do so.

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