



Growing-up Online

The Llanishen High School
Parents' Guide



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An introduction from our Headteacher

If there's one thing we've learned since publishing our first Social Media Guide in 2024, it's that the online world doesn't stand still.

In just two years artificial intelligence has become part of everyday life, new platforms have appeared, others have disappeared and conversations around children's online safety have become louder than ever. Governments around the world are taking notice too. [Australia has introduced legislation](#) restricting access to social media for under-16s, and the [UK Government](#) has confirmed it is proceeding with a similar ban, expected to begin in spring 2027 if it passes Parliament. The platforms would include Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X. WhatsApp and Signal are not part of the ban. Although these proposals are not currently law in Wales, they reflect a growing recognition that parents are navigating an increasingly complex online landscape.

That doesn't mean technology is something to fear. Used well, it helps children stay connected with friends, discover new interests, learn new skills and express themselves. Many of the opportunities available to today's young people simply didn't exist a generation ago. At the same time social media, gaming, messaging apps and artificial intelligence all bring new challenges, from privacy and misinformation to cyberbullying, scams and inappropriate content. Keeping up with those changes isn't easy.

That's exactly why we decided to update this guide.

When we first published in 2024, it was shaped by the experiences of our students' parents.

This year, we asked those questions again because we wanted to understand what has changed, what parents are most concerned about today and where they would value more support.

One message came through loud and clear. Parents aren't looking to become experts in every app, game or online trend. They simply want the confidence to ask the right questions and know where to turn for reliable advice.

Those conversations are built on trust. When children know they can speak openly without fear of immediate judgement or punishment, they're far more likely to ask for help when they need it most. Perhaps that sounds familiar.

You may never have heard of a platform your child is using. They might know more about privacy settings than you do. That's perfectly normal. It's about showing an interest, asking questions and making sure your child knows they can come to you if something doesn't feel right.

This guide brings together feedback from our parents, current advice from leading online safety organisations and practical suggestions you can use at home. It has also been expanded to reflect wider digital lives of young people today, including gaming, messaging apps and artificial intelligence alongside social media.



Our aim hasn't changed since 2024. We want you as parents to feel informed, supported and confident enough to navigate this rapidly changing landscape with your child. We hope this reassures you that, while technology continues to evolve, the conversations you have at home remain one of the most powerful ways to help your child enjoy the benefits of being online while staying safe.

Finally, thank you to the parents who took the time to share their views. Your honesty and insight have shaped every page of this guide, and it is a far more useful resource because of you. Thanks also to our marketing agency, Station Rd. for their support in developing this guide.



Mrs Sarah Parry
Headteacher

We hope this guide provides some helpful support and advice, and we want this information to be readily available to those who need it.

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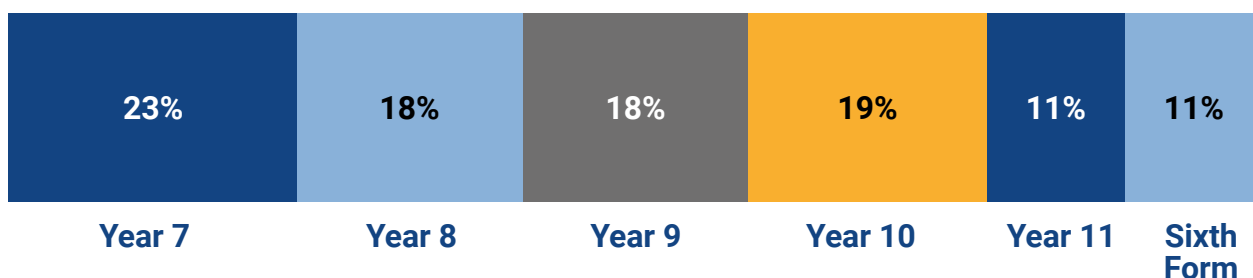
 Instagram - @LHScardiff



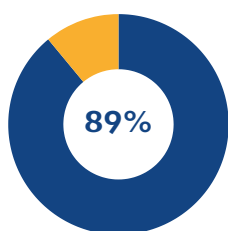
About the report

For this guide, we heard from just under 200 parents across all year groups, helping us to better understand their key concerns and considerations about their children's social media use.

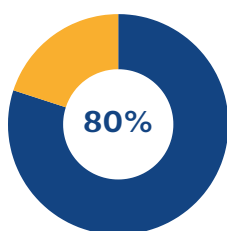
Parent response by year group:



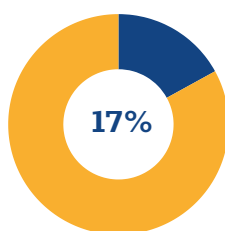
Feedback at a glance:



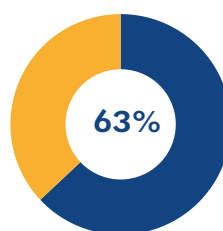
89% would support stricter age restrictions on children's access to social media (63% strongly support).



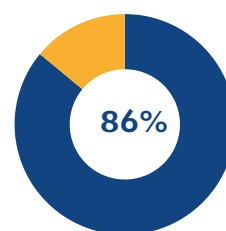
80% believed that social media had a negative impact on mental health - at least sometimes.



Mental wellbeing was still a major concern when it comes to social media use (16%), but exposure to inappropriate content is now the leading worry (17%).



63% of parents have discussed safe AI use with their child, but only 18% are very confident their child uses AI safely; 33% are not very or not at all confident.



86% set screen-time rules, though only 40% say they are consistently enforced.

Parent responses:

"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."

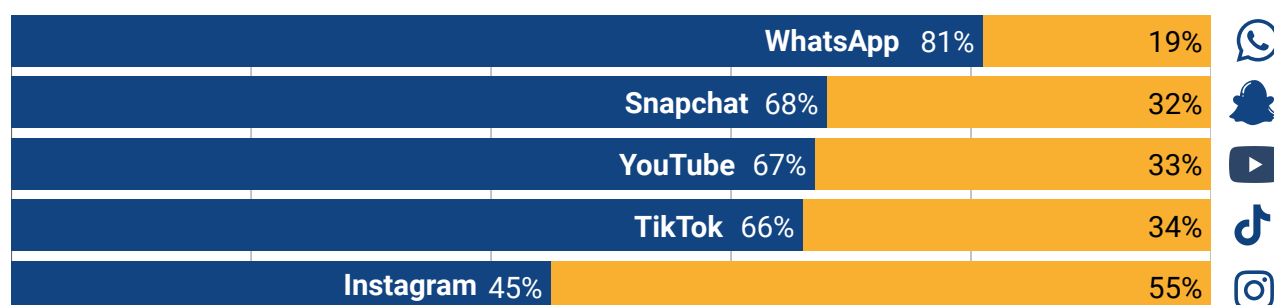


Section 1: Staying safe online

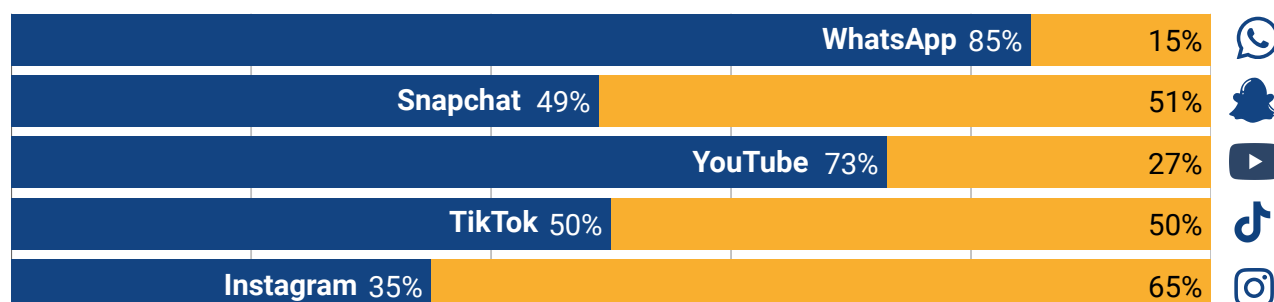
Accessing social media and the wider online world has never been easier for children and young people. In both our 2024 and 2026 parent surveys, almost every parent told us their child has access to the internet at home. Smartphones continue to be the main way students access social media, messaging apps, games and online content.

Social media usage:

2024



2026



It won't come as a surprise that social media has become part of everyday life for many children. They're growing up in a world where smartphones, messaging apps and online communities have always existed. To them, sharing a photo, sending a voice note or joining a group chat feels completely normal. But while they're often confident using the technology, they don't always recognise the risks that come with sharing personal information online or understand just how far a post, photo or message can travel.

If you've ever felt like you're playing catch-up with the latest app or online trend, you're certainly not alone. The good news is that you don't need to know everything.

Having regular conversations and understanding a few key safety principles can make a difference.

And we're here to help.

93%

of parents surveyed said they already felt comfortable talking to their child about social media. This guide is about building on that confidence.



Share, but don't overshare:

Remember being in high school hoping an embarrassing moment or haircut would soon be forgotten? Today's children don't always get that luxury. The internet has a very long memory.

Even if a post or a message is deleted later, it may already have been screenshot, screen-recorded or shared with others, including online platforms like Snapchat, where messages appear to disappear. You can't always be sure who's behind an online profile, so it's worth reminding your child that once something is online, they lose a degree of control over where it goes next.

Getting into the habit of pausing before hitting "post" gives them the chance to think about who might see it now and in the future.

Another useful conversation to have is about location sharing. Features such as Snap Map, live location sharing in messaging apps and location tags on social media make it easy for friends to see where someone is. While that can be useful, children don't always stop to think about who else might have access to that information.

Take a few minutes to explore these settings together. The answer might surprise both of you. Decide as a family when location sharing is useful, and when it's safer to switch it off.

[Privacy settings are one of the simplest ways to improve online safety.](#) Most platforms allow users to control who can see their content, contact them or follow their account. Spending ten minutes reviewing these settings together every few months not only improves security, it also creates another opportunity to talk about how your child is using social media.



Starting these conversations with your child:

Conversations about social media shouldn't feel like an interrogation. Sometimes a simple question while you're in the car or eating dinner can tell you far more than sitting them down for a "chat":

- Have you checked the privacy settings on your social media accounts lately? Can you show me how you've set them up?
- If someone you've never met wanted to follow or message you, what would you do?
- Before you post something, who do you think might see it today? And who might see it in six months?
- Who can see your location at the moment? Can you wait until you get home to post on apps like Instagram or Facebook?
- When using Snapchat, do you keep your account in 'Ghost Mode' so your live location can be hidden?





Your Child. The Expert.

Ask your child to show you a new app, game or AI tool they're enjoying. Let them be the expert for a few minutes -you'll often learn more about how they use technology than by asking direct questions.

Set a strong password:

Strong passwords remain one of the easiest ways to keep online accounts secure.

While most websites are secure and social media platforms have now introduced two-step verification, a strong, unique password is still one of the best ways to protect an account if login details are compromised. [The National Cyber Security Centre recommends enabling two-step verification wherever it is available, as it adds an extra layer of protection.](#)



Help your child set a strong password:

- Some of the tips may seem obvious, but weak or reused passwords remain one of the most common reasons online accounts are hacked. Spending a few extra minutes setting up strong passwords can save you a great deal of frustration later.
- Use different passwords for each of your online accounts and social media platforms just in case one is compromised.
- Include a mix of numbers, symbols as well as uppercase and lowercase letters. Better still, encourage your child to use a longer passphrase that's memorable but difficult for someone else to guess.
- Consider using the strong passwords generated by Apple, Google or a trusted password generator so they don't feel tempted to reuse the same password across multiple accounts. Just make sure to note it down somewhere safe or ensure it's saved securely in a password manager, or your device's keychain.



Never share passwords. If your child thinks someone else may know their password, they should change it immediately. And never share one-time verification codes with anyone, even if the request appears to come from a friend or someone claiming to work for a platform.

It's easy to think, "it won't happen to me", particularly when you're young. That's why it's worth explaining that most hacked accounts aren't targeted personally - they're the result of weak or reused passwords.

38%

of parents surveyed said they found it difficult to keep up with the number of online platforms their child used. This is up from 30% in 2024 - which is completely understandable. We are with you.

Recognising harmful content:

We understand that it can be hard to keep track of all the new platforms available. Many parents we surveyed told us they felt exactly the same. But the reality is children can come across a wide range of harmful content online. This may include offensive language, bullying, scams, misinformation, AI-generated content, inappropriate material or messages designed to manipulate or upset them.

Recent research from [Ofcom](#) shows that children are encountering an increasingly wide variety of online content across social media, video-sharing platforms, messaging apps and online games.

While most of the children surveyed felt safe (81%) understandably parents were divided with less than half believing the benefits of social media outweigh the risks.

No parent can monitor everything their child sees online -nor should you feel you have to. Focus on helping them develop good judgement. Children are naturally curious. Help them to question and recognise when content doesn't look or feel right and know they can always speak to a trusted adult.

36%

of parents surveyed said they needed to speak with their teenager about inappropriate posts. This is down by 4% in 2024 which is encouraging, with 93% of parents saying they felt comfortable talking to their children about social media.



Keeping the conversation going:

One of the most effective ways to help keep your child safe online isn't a parental control or privacy setting - it's building a relationship where they feel comfortable talking to you. The online world changes quickly, and no parent can be expected to know every app, game or trend. That's okay. What matters most is that your child knows they can come to you if something doesn't feel right.

Many children worry that if they admit something has gone wrong online, they'll immediately lose access to their device or get into trouble. As a result, they may keep problems to themselves until they become much harder to deal with. Often, they're more worried about disappointing you than the problem itself. The [NSPCC](#) highlights that letting them know you'll listen first can make it much easier for them to ask for help.

It's also natural for your child to want more privacy online, just as they do in other parts of their lives. Wanting private conversations with friends isn't, in itself, a cause for concern. Instead, look out for changes in behaviour or secrecy that feel out of character, and use curiosity rather than confrontation to understand what's changed.

A calm, supportive response makes it much more likely they'll tell you about a problem earlier. Whether they've seen something upsetting, received an inappropriate message, fallen for a scam or simply made a mistake, knowing they can ask for help without fear of immediate judgement can make all the difference.

This doesn't mean there shouldn't be boundaries. Rules around screen time, respectful behaviour and responsible technology use are important.



You can support your child by:

- Talking about scams, fake profiles, website pop-ups and suspicious messages.
- Reminding them not to click unfamiliar links or download unknown files - even if it appears to be from someone they know.
- Helping them recognise that not everything they see online, including AI generated images, videos and messages, is genuine.
- Using parental controls or content filters where appropriate for your child's age.
- Reassuring them that they can come to you if something online makes them uncomfortable or worried.

However, where possible, try to make listening and solving the problem together your first response, rather than immediately taking devices away. There will be times when restricting access is the right decision. However, if children believe this to be the automatic consequence of asking for help, they may become less willing to come to you in the first place.

Ultimately, you don't need to know everything about the online world. Your child simply needs to know that, whatever happens, you're in their corner.





Five ways to encourage open conversations:

1. Stay calm

Your first reaction often determines whether your child will come to you again.

2. Be curious, not critical

Instead of asking "Why did you do that?" try "Can you tell me what happened?"

3. Listen before solving

Give your child time to explain before offering advice or solutions.

4. Reassure first

Let them know they've done the right thing by talking to you, even if a mistake has been made.

5. Solve the problem together

Ask, "What do you think we should do next?" before agreeing on the best course of action together.

Open conversations won't prevent every online risk, but they make it much more likely that your child will ask for help when they need it most. This is particularly important when it comes to online grooming, fake profiles and other forms of online exploitation.



Your child doesn't need a parent who knows every app. They need a parent they feel safe talking to.

Staying safe online and fake profiles:

While most online interactions are completely harmless, some adults use the internet to exploit children and young people. This can happen through social media, messaging apps, online games or livestreaming platforms.

[CEOP Education](#) continues to warn that online grooming often begins on the same platforms children use every day to chat with friends or play games.

There are typically two main approaches from online predators, grooming and catfishing.



1. Grooming

This is when someone gradually builds trust with a young person before attempting to manipulate, exploit or abuse them. They may offer emotional support, gifts, compliments or make the child feel special before asking them to keep secrets, share personal information or send images.

2. Catfishing

This is when someone creates a fake online identity to deceive others. They may use someone else's photographs and personal details to appear trustworthy or to build relationships under a false identity.

Young people are often confident online, but adults who seek to exploit children are skilled at building trust and manipulating emotions. Keeping conversations open at home remains one of the most effective ways to help your children stay safe online.



Warning signs:

We teach our children not to talk to strangers in the real world. Online, it isn't always obvious who's on the other side of the screen.

Be cautious if someone online:

- Encourages them to keep a friendship secret.
- Wants conversations to move to another app or private platform.
- Asks for personal information.
- Offers gifts, money or opportunities that seem too good to be true.
- Becomes overly affectionate very quickly.
- Threatens to share private messages or images.
- Avoids video calls or talking over the phone while making excuses.



Helping your child stay safe:

- Talk regularly about who they're speaking to online.
- Explain how to report and block inappropriate behaviour on apps and games.
- Discuss healthy online relationships and the importance of setting boundaries.
- Make sure they understand the risks of sharing personal information or intimate images.
- Remind them they can always come to you or another trusted adult without fear of being judged or getting into trouble.

Section 2: Building resilience

In reality, social media, messaging apps, gaming and AI are now part of growing up. We are raising and educating a generation of young people who learn, create, socialise and express themselves online. But, while technology brings many benefits, online platforms can also influence how young people see themselves and understand the world around them. Finding a healthy balance isn't always easy.

Our latest parent survey suggests attitudes, like technology, are changing. In 2024, nearly 30% of parents believed social media consistently had a negative impact on their teenager's mental wellbeing. In 2026, that figure fell to 22%, while 50% of parents gave neutral responses.

While mental wellbeing remains an important concern, our latest survey shows parents are increasingly worried about a wider range of issues. In 2024, 29% of parents recognised wellbeing as a top concern in their child's social media use. Today, that figure is 16%, with exposure to inappropriate content now the leading concern at 30% and distraction from school close behind at 15%. In terms of platforms, TikTok caused the greatest concern for almost half of parents, followed closely by Snapchat.

Rather than focusing on the technology itself, this section looks at the habits and behaviours that can have the biggest impact on your child's wellbeing and the small conversations that can help them build a healthier relationship with life online.

In 2024, 29% of parents named mental health as their top concern in their child's social media use.

In 2026, that figure is 16% while exposure to inappropriate content became the leading concern at 30%.

Scroll. Like. Repeat:

Having likes and followers can make us feel good about ourselves. For today's teenagers, they're often more than just numbers -they can feel like a measure of acceptance, friendship and belonging. Young people can share their lives, get creative and be heard through online platforms.

But they can also start to feel as though their self-worth is linked to the number of likes, comments or followers they receive. Unlike many experiences in the offline world, that feedback is often immediate making it easy to slip into comparing themselves with others or measuring their value through online reactions rather than real-life relationships.



The platforms themselves are designed to keep us coming back. Notifications, streaks, recommendations and endless scrolling all compete for our attention, making it easy to lose track of time or feel the need to keep checking what's happening. That's why it's important to help your child build healthy habits around technology, rather than expecting them to rely on willpower. How many times have you caught yourself 'doom-scrolling'?

If you notice your teenager becoming overly focused on likes, followers or checking their phone, it could mean they're looking for the same reassurance, connection and sense of belonging that we've all looked for growing up. For today's teenagers, online and offline friendships aren't separate. The lines are blurred with conversations and experiences move seamlessly between the two.

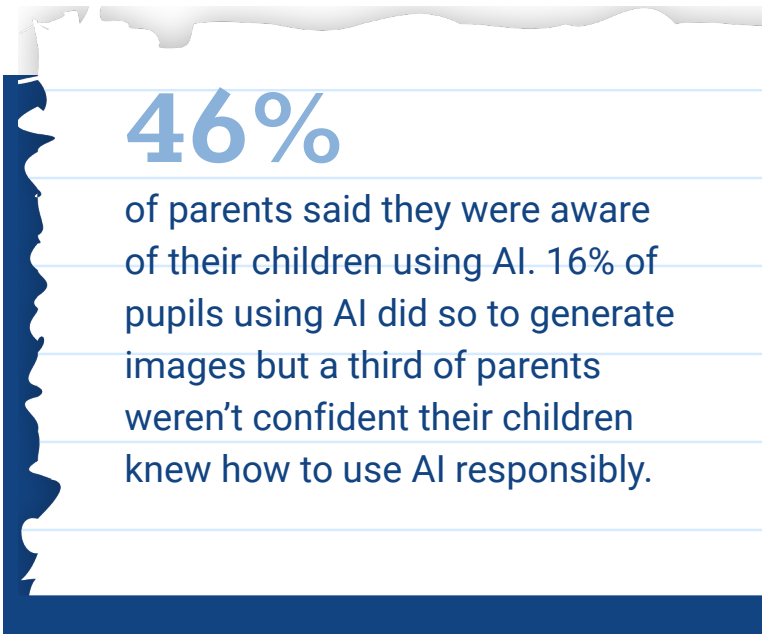
Rather than asking them to stop using social media altogether, it may help to encourage a little more balance:

- Could they avoid posting for a few days and see how it feels?
- Could they hide the like counts on Instagram so they're less focused on numbers?
- Ask them what they're hoping to get from sharing something online. Is it to keep friends updated, express themselves or simply seek reassurance?
- Help them make time for people, hobbies and activities that leave them feeling confident and good about themselves without needing a screen.
- Remind them that not every moment needs to be shared. Some of life's best memories are the ones that happened and stay offline.

Don't believe everything you scroll:

Social media isn't real life. It's more like a highlights reel - you see the best bits, or at least the bits that someone wants you to see. While that can be entertaining and inspiring, it can also affect self-esteem if it's taken on face value.

Today's teenagers aren't just comparing themselves to carefully chosen photographs. They're increasingly seeing AI-enhanced images, beauty filters and edited videos that can make already unrealistic standards feel normal. In many cases, it isn't obvious that an image has been altered at all.



46%

of parents said they were aware of their children using AI. 16% of pupils using AI did so to generate images but a third of parents weren't confident their children knew how to use AI responsibly.

It's worth reminding your child that what they see online is often someone's most polished version of themselves, rather than everyday life. The 'perfect' body, flawless skin, luxury lifestyle or "perfect day" they're comparing themselves to may have taken dozens of attempts, careful editing or even AI tools to create.



The more time we spend engaging with this type of content, the more similar content we're likely to be shown. Helping young people question what they're seeing online, rather than simply accepting it as reality, is becoming an increasingly important digital skill.

To help your teen avoid the comparison cycle, here are some ideas you might want to share.



Avoiding the comparison cycle:

- Unfollow accounts that don't make you feel good about yourself.
- Find smaller creators and communities you genuinely relate to or that inspire you in a positive way.
- Share and engage with content that makes you feel encouraged, informed and creative.
- 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 might be time to make a change.

Managing screen time:

Smart devices are pretty central to most teenagers' lives. They use them to complete homework, chat with friends, watch videos, play games, revise, listen to music and increasingly, use AI tools to help them learn and solve problems.

The challenge isn't simply the amount of time they spend on a screen, it's finding a healthy balance between their online and offline lives.

In our latest survey, while 86% of parents have introduced rules around screen time at home, up on 66% in 2024, almost half (45%) admit those rules aren't always enforced. If that sounds familiar, you're certainly not alone. Many parents told us they understand why boundaries matter, but also recognise that today's teenagers do so much of their socialising, learning and relaxing through the same device.

That's why conversations about screen time are often more successful when they focus on balance rather than simply reducing hours. Two teenagers could both spend three hours on their phone, but have completely different experiences. One might be revising, chatting to friends and organising football training, while another spends the evening endlessly scrolling.

And many young people don't feel they can simply "switch off". Group chats continue long after the school day has finished, gaming sessions have become places where friends socialise and AI tools are increasingly being used to support homework and revision. Some teenagers worry that if they don't reply quickly, they'll miss out or be left behind. There's that immediacy of technology again. Understanding that pressure can make conversations about boundaries feel less like a battle.

"Sometimes I don't think my child realises why certain videos keep appearing. I'd like them to question what they see rather than accepting it as normal"



Sleep and everyday wellbeing:

It's perhaps no surprise, then, that almost half of the parents we surveyed said screen use 'sometimes' affected their child's sleep, 10% said their sleep was 'frequently' impacted, while 15% were concerned it was disrupting their studies and everyday life.

Good quality sleep plays an important role in children's concentration, emotional wellbeing and ability to learn. [NHS Guidance](#) highlights that sleep helps children pay attention, learn new things and remember what they've learnt, while poor sleep can affect behaviour and mood. [The Sleep Charity](#) also recommends consistent bedtime routines and reducing screen use before bed to support healthy sleep habits.



Helping your teen build healthy digital habits:

1. Use 'Do Not Disturb' or Focus Modes when they're doing homework, spending time with family or winding down before bed. It can reduce distraction without needing to take their phone away completely.
2. Look at their screen time together. Rather than focus on the total number of hours, ask what they were doing. Which apps leave them feeling informed, connected or creative? Which leaves them feeling tired, distracted or stressed?
3. Make time for activities that don't involve a screen. Whether it's football, running, the gym, music, baking, meeting friends or simply getting outside, confidence grows when young people have different places to find enjoyment and relax.
4. Create some tech-free routines as a family. Mealtimes, the first hour after school or the last hour before bed are all good opportunities to reconnect without constant notifications.
5. Give them notice before asking them to stop. Whether they're chatting to friends, playing an online game or using an AI tool to finish homework, a few minutes' warning allows them to finish what they're doing and could help avoid confrontation.



In the news.



In **July 2026**, the UK

Government announced proposals that would introduce default **overnight social media curfews between midnight and 6am for 16 and 17-year-olds.**

The proposals also include switching off features that encourage prolonged scrolling by default. At the time of publication, these measures are **expected to be introduced from early 2027** but have not yet become law.

Whatever happens next, the proposals reflect a wider conversation taking place across society: how do we help young people develop healthier digital habits while still enjoying the many benefits technology can offer?

How can technology support wellbeing?

We've talked a lot about the challenges, but it's important to remember that technology can have a positive impact on young people's wellbeing too. Whether it's following their local sports team, learning a new language or following a recipe.

Used well, social media, messaging apps, gaming and AI can help your child:

- Stay connected with friends and family.
- Reduce feelings of loneliness or isolation.
- Express themselves creatively.
- Discover new interests, hobbies and communities.
- Learn new skills and revise.
- Find encouragement and inspiration from people with shared interests.
- Work together through gaming and online communities.

Like any tool, the impact technology has on wellbeing often depends on how it's being used. Helping your child recognise which online experiences leave them feeling happy, confident and connected -and which leave them feeling anxious or distracted -is one of the most valuable digital skills they can develop.

Technology doesn't need to be removed from your child's life unless it's having a significant negative impact. The goal isn't to eliminate screens; it's to help your child build healthy habits.

These habits aren't built overnight. And you don't need to get everything right and neither will your child. Stay interested. Ask questions. Keep the conversation going.

Although this section focuses on wellbeing, many of the habits we've discussed - questioning what we see online, building healthy digital habits and keeping conversations open - also help people deal with wider online risks, including exposure to inappropriate content, which parents identified as their biggest concern in our latest survey.



Section 3: Cyberbullying

Unfortunately bullying hasn't disappeared - it's simply changed. While social media remains a place where bullying can happen, today's young people are just as likely to experience it through messaging apps, group chats, online gaming and shared images or videos. Friendships now move so easily between school and the digital world, disagreements can quickly follow children home.

Our last parent survey suggests that fewer parents (22%) believe their child has experienced cyberbullying than in 2024 (26%). Fewer parents are also unsure whether it has happened (10% compared to 18% in 2024). This may reflect growing awareness of children's online lives, but cyberbullying can still be difficult to spot because it often happens privately on personal devices. We shouldn't assume that because we can't see it, it isn't happening.

Over a quarter (26%) of parents said their children had experienced bullying through social media in 2024. Our 2026 survey found this has fallen, while the number of parents unsure whether it has happened has also reduced.

What cyberbullying looks like today:

Cyberbullying is often carried out by people your child already knows. It can include repeated unwanted messages, spreading rumours, excluding someone from group chats, sharing screenshots of private conversations, creating fake accounts, posting embarrassing photos or videos, or targeting someone through online gaming. New AI tools can also be misused to alter images or create convincing fake content, making it even more important to question what we see before reacting or sharing.

Unlike previous generations, young people cannot always leave bullying at the school gates. Messages, notifications and shared content can continue long after the school day has ended, making it feel relentless.

Supporting your child:

Many children don't immediately tell an adult they're being bullied. They may feel embarrassed, worry the situation may get worse or fear their phone will simply be taken away. Creating an open, nonjudgmental conversation makes it far more likely they'll speak up when something isn't right.



Warning signs:

- Changes in eating or sleeping habits.
- Becoming unusually anxious, withdrawn, upset or even angry.
- Avoiding friends or activities they previously enjoyed.
- Reluctance to go to school.
- Suddenly deleting apps or becoming secretive about their devices.





If your child is being bullied:

- Save screenshots or other evidence.
- Avoid responding in anger or retaliation.

- Block and report the account or player where appropriate.
- Tell a trusted member of staff if other pupils are involved.
- Reassure your child that asking for help will not automatically mean losing access to their device.

Have each other's backs:

Most young people are not responsible for bullying, but many will witness it. Encouraging your child to support others, think before sharing and avoid joining in with negative behaviour helps create a more respectful online culture. Even small acts of kindness can make a significant difference to someone who is feeling isolated.

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.



Taking time before reacting to something.



Standing up for someone who is being targeted, even if it's a supportive message.

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



Reporting online bullying and harassment:

Rest assured, we take bullying very seriously, whether it happens in person or online. Concerns can be reported to:

- A class teacher, form teacher, Year Team Leader (YTL) or any other teacher.
- A buddy or peer mentor - who can be found in the Mentor Room in the Geography Block at break and lunch times.
- Other school staff including the Youth Mentor, the attendance officer, the school counsellor, pupil 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.

Not every online risk comes from another person. Alongside cyberbullying, young people may also encounter inappropriate content, scams, fake accounts and requests to share personal information. So how can we help children recognise these wider risks and respond confidently?



Section 4: Safeguarding online

The internet gives young people incredible opportunities to learn, socialise and explore their interests. But it also brings risks that can be difficult to recognise, particularly as new apps, games and AI tools continue to develop.

Our latest parent survey found that privacy and safety remain a concern for many families (11%), but parents are now far more likely to worry about the type of content their children are exposed to (35%) and the possibility of contact with strangers online. Fortunately, there are practical steps every family can take to reduce these risks. In this section, we'll discuss parental controls, gaming, privacy settings and digital footprints, along with simple conversations that can help children make safer online choices.

73%
of parents said they have set up parental controls on their child's social media accounts, compared with 58% in 2024.

Parental controls:

Parental controls are one of the simplest ways to reduce your child's exposure to inappropriate content and manage how they use their devices. They are not a replacement for conversations and trust, but they can provide valuable reassurance while children develop skills to manage their online lives independently.

It's worth explaining this to your child too. Older children, in particular, may see parental controls as a lack of trust or an invasion of their privacy. Framing them as a safety tool rather than a punishment can make these conversations much easier. Explain that parental controls aren't about spying on them; they're about creating a safer online environment. Just as you wouldn't let them jump into a car without lessons, we don't expect children to travel the digital superhighways without guidance.

Today's parental controls can help you:

- Filter age-appropriate content.
- Approve or restrict app downloads.
- Set screen time limits.
- Manage in-app purchases.
- Restrict who can contact your child.
- Review privacy settings together.

Rather than setting these up once and forgetting about them, review them regularly as your child gets older. Their online habits, the apps they use and the risks they face will change over time.

Device settings change regularly, we recommend following the latest guidelines:

- [Apple Screen Time and Family Sharing.](#)
- [Google Family Link.](#)
- [Meta Family Centre \(Facebook & Instagram\).](#)
- [TikTok Family Pairings.](#)
- [Xbox Family Management.](#)
- [Nintendo Switch Parental Controls.](#)

Most platforms also include dedicated online safety hubs with advice on privacy settings, reporting users and managing age-appropriate content.



Gaming, chat and spending:

Online gaming has become one of the most social parts of many young people's digital lives.

35%

of parents said their child 'regularly' plays online games involving interaction with other players, while a further 37.5% said they play these games 'occasionally'.

For many children this is a positive way to spend time with their friends. However, it's worth remembering that online games increasingly include voice chat, messaging and the ability to communicate with people they have never met.



Talk to your child about:

- Who they're chatting to while they play.
- Never sharing personal information.
- Recognising when someone makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Blocking and reporting inappropriate behaviour.
- Leaving conversations that don't feel right.

Many games also encourage players to spend money on cosmetic items (Skins), virtual currency or additional content like upgrades or subscriptions.

A few simple settings can prevent any nasty surprises. Disable one-click purchases where possible, require approval before payments are made and check whether games use virtual currencies, as it's often difficult to tell how much real money is actually being spent.

58%

of parents surveyed said their child had spent money within a game or app.

Managing an online presence:

Photos, comments, likes, videos and even usernames can create an online picture that lasts much longer than we expect.

Who's retired their crazygingerbiscuit900@hotmail account?

This digital footprint may be seen by colleges, universities, apprenticeship providers, future employers and sports clubs.

Everything we share online contributes to a digital footprint.





Help your child to:

- Review the privacy settings on their accounts regularly.
- Think before posting, commenting or sharing.
- Remember that screenshots can outlast deleted posts.
- Represent themselves authentically online.
- Think about how they'd like others to see them in the future.

What is 'Sharenting'?

We are naturally proud of our children. Whether it's their first day of high school, a sporting achievement or exam results, social media makes it easy to share those moments with friends and family.

This has led to the term 'sharenting' -sharing information, photographs or videos about your child online.

There's nothing wrong with celebrating special moments, but it's worth thinking about how your child might feel before posting. We don't need to tell you how quickly they grow up. They soon develop their own sense of self, often becoming more aware of their online identity and may want more say over what is shared about them.

Protecting personal information:

It's not about hiding your personality, it's about protecting your personal information. We touched on oversharing earlier in the guide, but it's worth revisiting because these details can be used for scams, impersonation and fraud.

Encourage your child to never share information such as their:

- **Full name.**
- **Home address.**
- **Date of birth.**
- **Telephone number.**
- **National Insurance number.**
- **School.**
- **Bank account or payment details.**
- **Account information.**
- **One-time security codes.**

It's also worth checking which apps are sharing your child's location. Features such as Snap Map, live location sharing on WhatsApp and location tagging on social media can reveal far more information than many young people realise.

Take a few minutes to review these settings together and discuss when location sharing is useful -and when it's safer to switch it off.



Inappropriate content:

One of the biggest changes in our latest survey is parents' growing concern about the type of content children encounter online.

Not all inappropriate content is searched for deliberately. Algorithms can recommend increasingly extreme material, while group chats, social media feeds and gaming communities may expose young people to content that is upsetting, misleading or unsuitable for their age.

This might include:

- **Violent or distressing videos.**
- **Sexual content.**
- **Hate speech.**
- **Misinformation.**
- **AI-generated images or videos that appear real.**
- **Scams or fake competitions.**

We know it's happening, with over a third of parents surveyed saying "they've had to speak to their child about inappropriate posts" across social media.

Rather than trying to block everything, focus on preparing your child for what they might come across. Ask them what they would do if a friend shared something upsetting in a group chat, or if they saw a video that made them feel uncomfortable. These conversations are often far more valuable before something happens.

Remind your child they won't get in trouble for telling you about something they've seen online.

Your child knowing they can come to you for help without fear of being blamed it's much more likely they'll ask for help.



Scammers increasingly target young people through the apps, games and platforms they use every day. The message often looks genuine and creates a sense of urgency or excitement:

- **Free gaming rewards** - free Robux, V-Bucks or in-game currency in exchange for login details.
- **Fake giveaways** - competitions asking children to click a link or share personal information to claim a prize.
- **Hacked accounts** - a message from someone they know asking for money, gift cards or verification codes.
- **AI-generated ads** - convincing celebrity images or videos promoting fake products, investments or competitions.
- **Delivery or payment messages** - texts or emails claiming a parcel can't be delivered until payment is made. We've all had these.

Technology will continue to develop, but open conversations, sensible safeguards and an interest in your child's online world remain the best ways to help them stay safe.

If inappropriate content does appear, encourage your child to close the app, report the content where appropriate and talk to a trusted adult. Most platforms, including TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Roblox, now provide built-in reporting tools to help users flag harmful content.



Section 5: Summary

Advances in technology aren't slowing down, although, at times, we wish they would. New apps will catch on, artificial intelligence will become more capable and the way our young people communicate online will keep changing.

The good news is that the most important advice rarely changes. Stay interested in your child's online world. Ask questions. Listen without judgement. Set healthy boundaries together and keep the conversations open.

You don't need to know every app, game or online trend. Your child simply needs to know they have a trusted adult they can turn to whenever something doesn't feel right.

Several parents told us they'd welcome regular updates on emerging apps, online risks and digital trends. We'll continue sharing shorter platform guides and online safety updates across our own social media throughout the year – so don't forget to give us a follow.

We hope this guide has given you greater confidence to support your child in building safe, healthy and positive digital habits. If you would like any further information or support, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We're here to help:

 Facebook - @llanishenhigh
 Instagram - @LHScardiff



Section 6: Helpful links

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.

Many parents understandably have mixed feelings about advice produced by social media companies themselves. We've included these resources because they contain the most up-to-date guidance on privacy settings, parental controls and reporting tools. We've also included independent organisations, such as the NSPCC and Childline, for broader advice on keeping children safe online:

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:

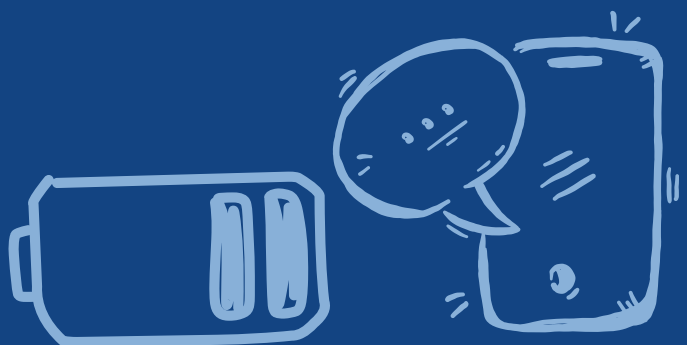
https://assets.ctfassets.net/gqgsr8avay9x/60HGeg7lGysoFIH8bucYUs/de27693efe8bf9b23cfabc9dd0f12a77/ParentGuide_2021_en_GB.pdf

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/>





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