



Thornton Primary School

Summer 2026 Online Safety Newsletter



This term we are sharing some articles which will hopefully support parents in making decisions about their child's online safety.

As we see our children develop and grow, it becomes increasingly difficult to keep up with the online content they seem so familiar with and particularly as children move on from primary school and expect to have a phone or device; it is hard to shield them from any online risks which they may experience.

Our advice is intended to provide you with a starting point and there are links for further information which will help you to stay one step ahead – for now! Please get in touch if we can be of any further help.

Mrs Davison

WhatsApp – Parent-Managed Accounts

WhatsApp update: Parent-Managed Accounts

WhatsApp have announced that they are rolling out the option of Parent Managed accounts for those under the age of 13. The settings will include allowing you to choose who can contact your child and ensuring only you can add them to groups.



Whilst these features could be useful, it is important to emphasise that just because the option now exists, WhatsApp may still not be an appropriate platform for your child to be on. We often receive reports of issues, particularly with group chats on WhatsApp. This can cause problems which then affect children in school so we ask you please to monitor your child's use of apps including WhatsApp whilst at home as we can support you, but cannot deal with problems caused by anything that happens out of school.

There is a guide here with more information [WhatsApp privacy guide - Internet Matters](#)

Five Nights at Freddy's

Five Nights at Freddy's is a horror game designed to frighten players with jump scares or creepy characters. It can be accessed from several places, for example on an Xbox (PEGI rating of 12) and on the App store (age rating of 13+). There is merchandise available, which may suggest that it is child friendly. We would recommend that you preview the game first to ascertain its suitability for your child. You can view Bark's review here:

[Five Nights At Freddy's: A Video Game Review For Parents | Bark](#)

Mobile Phones – do you know the risks?

We know that children having access to a smartphone can expose children to risks including:

- Viewing inappropriate content
- Excessive screen time/use, which in turn can affect their mental health and sleep pattern.
- Contact from inappropriate people/grooming
- Cyber bullying
- Spending money on inappropriate purchases and scams

What effects do mobile phones have on children's mental health?

Compass discuss the research around this important topic, outlining the positive and negative effects that mobile phones have:

[What effects do mobile phones have on children and young people's mental health - Compass](#)

EE Online Safety Hub

EE has published age guidance for smartphone usage to improve children's digital wellbeing. In summary, they recommend that children under 11 should use non-smart devices, for children aged 11-13, they advise that if a smartphone is used, then parental controls should be enabled and access to social media restricted. Finally, for 13-16-year-olds they still recommend that parental controls are implemented and appropriate restrictions set up. You can read the full guidance here:

[Online Safety for Kids | EE's Guide to Safe Phone & Internet Use](#)

Could you delay when your child is given a smartphone with Smartphone Free Childhood?

The premise behind this movement is that all parents/carers of a class all agree not to give their children smartphones (therefore the level of peer pressure is reduced) for a set time or until a specific age:

[Smartphone Free Childhood](#)

What device?

When you think it is the right time for your child to have a device, 'Which' have produced an informative comparison to look at the best option:

[First mobile phone: best dumb phones and smartphones for kids - Which?](#)

Are you worried about how much screen time your child is having?

Too much screen time can affect children's behaviour, sleep and concentration. For example, the more time they spend on their iPad, phone or computer, the less time they're spending running around outside, letting off steam or interacting with friends and family.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health have created a page that brings together key resources on screen time. Find out more here:

[Screen time and online harms: resources for members | RCPCH](#)

And advice for children 0-5: [©0-5_poster_HPFSS.pdf](#)



YouTube

YouTube have published their latest update on how parents can support their child on YouTube. 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 here:

[YouTube Safety Update: New Parental Controls for Teens - YouTube Blog](#)

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

[Understand your choices as a family - YouTube Help](#)



New Government Campaign – Is your child influenced by toxic content?

The Government have launched a new campaign providing guidance to parents on safety settings, conversation prompts and advice for tackling misinformation and harmful content. It also includes a quiz to help you and your child spot misleading or unreliable information online. You can find out more here:

[Is your child influenced by toxic content? New government campaign supports parents to talk about harmful online content - GOV.UK](#)

Backed by behavioural research and academic insights, new guidance has been made available to parents on safety settings, conversation prompts, and age-appropriate advice for tackling misinformation and harmful content – including ragebait and misogynistic content. It comes as a direct response to parents who have been calling out for support on how to navigate their children's use of social media.

Research that has been published shows that half of British parents admit having never spoken to their children about harmful online content, despite 90% of 11-year-olds now owning a smartphone.

You can find a full range of advice on the government's online safety website:

[Help your child stay safe online - Kids Online Safety](#) with information about

how to start conversations around online safety and what questions to ask.



BBC iPlayer for Kids

Children under the age of 13 can have their own iPlayer profile, which includes content from CBBC, CBeebies and other suitable BBC programmes. You can download the iPlayer app and then find out how to create a profile here:

[Long journey with kids? Best games, quizzes and BBC iPlayer shows - CBBC](#)

Going on a long journey? The BBC have also compiled a list of shows and films as well as games and quizzes to make the journey go quicker:

[Long journey with kids? Best games, quizzes and BBC iPlayer shows - CBBC](#)



Playing online games? Have you checked the age rating?

Age ratings exist to help protect your child as they show whether content is suitable for your child's age. Make sure you check the age rating of any game your child is playing.

Why should I check?

Not all games will be appropriate for your child. Some may appear child friendly due to fun or cartoon style graphics but still include unsuitable content. Age ratings consider factors such as violence, frightening content, bad language and/or in app purchases.

How can I check?

Most games are rated by PEGI (Pan European Game Information), who not only state the age you should be to play the game but also provide further content descriptors to give you an indication of the type of content that your child might encounter. Apps are rated by the App store/Google Play.

How can I stop my child from accessing a game they are not old enough to play?

You can set up parental controls to restrict access to games or apps that your child is not old enough to play and set restrictions so any downloads/ purchases must be approved by you. For example:

- Nintendo– restrict software by age so if you restrict to 10+, games with that rating or above cannot be played by your child.
- Xbox / PlayStation– set an age limit so anything that exceeds that age rating must be approved.
- Apple / Google (Family Link)– restrict your child from installing apps, allowing you to review before approving all purchases.

What else do I need to do?

- Review any additional content descriptors, read reviews and check if the game includes any form of communication or in app purchases. This will help inform your decision as to whether the game is suitable for your child.
- For any game your child plays, set up appropriate parental controls.
- If you decide a game is not appropriate, explain to your child why. Weknowyourchild might feel peer pressure to play certain games, but explaining your reasoning will help them understand your decision.

Further information can be found here: [Gaming: what parents and carers need to know](#)