

**LYTHAM
STANNES**

HIGH SCHOOL



A HELPFUL GUIDE TO **ONLINE SAFETY**

SAFETY FEATURES AND SAFETY ISSUES

2023 / 2024

Welcome Message



Dear Parents / Carers,

I am Karen Hagenaaars, the Online Safety Lead here at LSA. This means that I run a wonderful team of student Online Safety Ambassadors and organise whole school, online safety events and teaching resources.

Most of our children love their smartphones, gaming, social networking and using the Internet. These technologies are wonderful innovations and can be the source of almost unlimited information. Many of us find it almost impossible to live without them. If used properly these technologies both entertain us and make our lives easier.

However, the "unlimited information" aspect of the Internet can make it a very dangerous place to navigate.

In recent conversations with parents, it became clear that many of us feel we need a helping hand with keeping up to date with the various apps our children use everyday. This information booklet has been written to help you become aware of safety features and safety issues for commonly used apps and games.

This booklet was made with research from both myself and our Online Safety Ambassadors. It contains information, which was accurate at the time of publication, however, we do not claim it contains everything you need to know. It is a guide and a work in progress. It will be continually updated and modified as technology and information about apps and games develop and change.

Some of you may know far more than we do. Please get in touch if you do.

I hope you find this as useful as we did.

Best Wishes

K Hagenaaars

We recommend you:

1 Read recent news articles

Update yourself on the issues around young people being targeted by "influencers". Here are some reputable articles to start with:

<https://www.lythamhigh.lancs.sch.uk/parents/online-safety>



2 Ask your child what they're getting up to online

Show genuine interest, and try not to sound judgemental. Children are more likely to share if they feel you're interested, rather than trying to check up on them.

3 Have open discussions about influencers who are causing controversy

Don't tell your child how to think, but pose questions to support their thinking. Is what they've read or listened to true? How can they judge the reliability of what they hear or read?

The charity Bold Voices have a great toolkit to help with this: <https://www.boldvoices.co.uk/resources>



4 Be role models

We know our children learn how to behave by watching the adults around them. If you are worried your child has been exposed to views that are ignorant or belittle others, we hope this booklet will support you when having honest, open conversations about respect and integrity.

Parents' advice on apps and games used often by teens.

Snapchat

Logo



Description

Snapchat is a popular messaging app that lets users exchange pictures and videos (called snaps) that are meant to disappear after they're viewed.

Minimum Age

13+

Safety Features

This link provides a detailed booklet for parents to help you to install safety features for your child.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/parent-controls-docs/parental-control-snapchat.pdf>



Safety issues

Location sharing shows the live location of where you are. This is a safety risk. Ghost mode stops your child's location being visible to others.

Messages delete within 24 hours this means you have no record of what message you have received and what you have sent. This makes it very difficult to monitor what your child is exposed to.

FIFA / Ultimate Team

Logo



Description

FIFA 23 is a football video game published by EA (Electronic Arts). FIFA23 is the 30th and final instalment in the FIFA series that is developed by EA Sports, and the final instalment under the FIFA banner.

Minimum Age

FIFA 23 is rated E for Everyone.

Safety Features

In addition to console parental controls, FIFA games include a system called Playtime, that allows parents to monitor and restrict the amount of time or money players are spending on the game. This means you can allow your children to play online for a set amount of time or stipulate the amount of money they can spend on the game, even if that amount is zero.

Safety issues

In-game promotions. Unless precautions are taken a vast amount of money can be spent on improving their ultimate team. The game trades in FIFA points which seems harmless, but FIFA points are bought by money. **Chat mode** can be used when playing and the fact that it is used by all aged groups. It can lead to younger players being exposed to inappropriate chat. It is recommended that you monitor who your child is chatting with. **Ultimate team** has become a major feature in FIFA due to the revenue it generates. Children often save to 'level up' and earn coins. This is meant to be exciting, but it can also encourage **gambling** and **addictive behaviour** to develop.

TikTok

Logo



Description

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets you create, share and watch short clips. The app is popular for viral dances and celebrity cameos and is a creative and fun platform for teens to enjoy. Currently, the app is available in 75 languages with over 1 billion active users (Jan 2021).

Minimum Age

13+

Safety Features

Digital Wellbeing Like Facebook and Instagram, it has a digital well-being element (which is password protected) that alerts users who have been on the app for more than two hours. You can also turn on 'restricted mode' to filter out inappropriate content on the app.

Private account You can set an account to be private so that all videos can only be seen by the creator and no one else on the platform. With a private account, you can approve or deny users and limit incoming messages to followers only. Please note that even with a private account, your child's profile photo, username, and bio are still visible to all users on the platform. You can manage who can comment, duet and direct message your child on the app.

Privacy settings TikTok users under 18 will have their accounts set to private by default, which means only someone who the user approves as a follower can view their videos. The change is part of a wider package of measures designed to drive higher standards of user privacy and safety.

TikTok

Safety issues There have been many online trends and challenges on TikTok which can harm a child's physical health and mental well-being. Some examples of these are:

The silhouette challenge: where users create images or videos that are edited using a filter so they appear as a silhouette. Many teens are sexualizing themselves with this challenge. Filters can also be removed by others, so users must be careful about what they are wearing behind the camera.

The blackout challenge: this extremely dangerous challenge involves users interrupting their oxygen until they get close to losing consciousness. This challenge has led to the recent deaths of multiple children aged 9-14. Teens filmed themselves doing this and posted it on TikTok.

Back cracking challenge: a user films themselves as they crack the back of their friend without any training. Medical professionals warn that this can twist and pull on the spine, resulting in long-term damage.

Seeing inappropriate content: inappropriate language or content posted, may make this less suitable for younger children.

Contact from strangers: Predators seeking to connect with children is another privacy and security risk on TikTok. Set up privacy and security settings to limit this contact.

In recent weeks we have seen a **trend** of young children being nominated to fight each other as a challenge on TikTok. These manipulative practices are a real concern for parents and schools nationwide. Please contact school if you ever uncover any inappropriate challenges that your child is viewing on TikTok. We tackle this best when we tackle it together.

Instagram



Logo

Description

Instagram is a free photo and video sharing app available on iPhone and Android. People can upload photos or videos to our service and share them with their followers or with a select group of friends. They can also view, comment and like posts shared by their friends on Instagram. Anyone 13 and older can create an account by registering an email address and selecting a username.

Minimum Age 13+

Safety Features

Follow this link to get a comprehensive guide to Instagram for parents:

<https://about.instagram.com/community/parents>



Family centre: this helps parents learn about various supervision tools and access tools and tips for talking to your teens about Instagram.

Enhance privacy settings: One of the most important things you can do to protect your account is turn on two-factor authentication. Set up an email address, phone number, WhatsApp or third-party app to help confirm it's you when you log in from a new device.

Disabling direct messages: Instagram introduced a new policy that prevents adults from messaging young people who don't follow them. You should make sure your child signs up with the right age and talk to them about who follows them on their account.

Instagram

Safety issues **Exposure to harmful upsetting content** – Because of how the platform shows users content it's easy to come across inappropriate or adult posts on the app.

Pressure – Young people might feel pressure to post certain images or videos based on what they're seeing on the app. This could lead them to experience issues with their self-esteem and well-being.

Unwanted contact – If you have a public account users can communicate with one another via private and public chat. Even if your account is set to private other users can still request to send you direct messages.

Location sharing – The platform allows you to share your location with others on the app. This is a big safety risk.

WhatsApp

Logo



Description

WhatsApp Messenger is a free instant messaging app available on both Android and iPhone. It allows you to send text messages to other users one-on-one or in groups. Importantly, WhatsApp chats go over the internet. This contrasts with standard SMS texting, which goes through your phone provider.

Minimum Age 16+

Safety Features

Privacy settings: Adjust your privacy settings to control who sees your information. You can set your last seen and online, profile photo, about, or status to the following options:
Everyone: All users can see your profile photo, about, or status.

My Contacts: Only contacts from your address book can see your last seen and online, profile photo, about, or status.

My Contacts Except...: Contacts from your address book, except those you exclude, can see your last seen and online, profile photo, about, or status.

Nobody: No one can see your last seen and online, profile photo, about, or status.

WhatsApp

Safety Features

Block or report contacts and messages: You can control who you interact with by blocking specific contacts or reporting messages or contacts on WhatsApp. When you receive a view once photo or video, you can report the account to WhatsApp directly from the media viewer.

Control Location Sharing: When the location sharing option is enabled, your child's photograph shared on WhatsApp will include their actual location when the photo was taken. Be careful of this and contemplate disabling location services.

Safety Issues

Cyberbullying: Teens use WhatsApp primarily for group texts, and they can accommodate groups of up to 250 people. So if a piece of fake information or rumour is spread, a harsh comment is made, or a fight arises, things can quickly escalate and spill outside of the WhatsApp context.

Sexting: Sexting is another reported safety issue for teens using WhatsApp. Unfortunately, WhatsApp is powerless to control this content. This is why parents are encouraged to check their child's content regularly.

Privacy Breach: While teens believe WhatsApp protects their screenshots and other information, this is not the case. You can also download private conversations and photographs. Another threat to privacy is the app's user data collection, which can be seen.

Fake News and Scams: Scams and false information abound on social media. Your teen will find it hard to distinguish between what is true and what is false. As WhatsApp allows users to communicate in groups of up to 250 people, it's simple for information to spread quickly, even if it's incorrect.

Facebook

Logo



Description

Facebook is a **social networking site** to **connect and share** with family and friends online. Designed for college students in 2004. By 2006, anyone over the age of 13 with a valid email address could join Facebook. Today, Facebook is the world's largest social network, with more than 1 billion users worldwide.

Minimum Age 13+

Safety Features

Password Safety: Tips to increase password security are: Choose a password your child doesn't use anywhere else online. Passwords are easy for your child to remember, but difficult for others to guess. Never share a password with anyone.

Set up two-factor authentication: Facebook will ask for a password and login code whenever Facebook notices an unusual login. Facebook will send a text message with a login code to your child's additional phone number, or your child can use a secure app such as Google Authenticator or Duo Mobile.

Login Alert: Facebook will notify you or your child if they see a suspicious login, Facebook will inform the device name as well as the login location.

Facebook

Safety Features

Friend control: This can control who can send your child friend requests, find Facebook by their email or phone number, and how people can search for their Facebook through other tools like Google. For controlling who can send friend requests to your child, your child should choose Friends of Friends instead of Everyone.

Safety Issues

Catfishing: Catfishing is similar to what online predators do. However, its purpose is to get money from the victim by pretending to be their love interest or friend. They seek single teens on Facebook and exploit their desire to be loved and cared for. Their only purpose is to con someone out of money. Although catfishing doesn't involve physical harm, a victim can feel heartbroken, humiliated, or depressed.

Sexting: Sexting on Facebook is a big problem among young people. It is the process of sharing sexually explicit content with others. Few teens are aware of the possible consequences. Although teens can decide to send nudes to one another just for 'fun', it could lead to their photos ending up all over the Internet. A receiver of a private message might think sharing it with others is funny. It can lead to public humiliation, depression, bullying, or social isolation. What's more, teens can 'sext' with predators who pretend to be their peers. As a result, they can fall victim to sexual abuse.

Identity theft: Teens tend to overshare personal information online, so they are exposed to identity theft. Taking advantage of kids' naivety, cybercriminals can steal their debit card data using scam messages and links that contain phishing. When a child follows the corrupted link, scammers immediately receive their Facebook login credentials and use them to get debit card details.

KIK



Logo

Description

This is a messaging app. It allows the user to send texts, videos, pictures and GIFS. You can go live using this app and contact anyone who also has this app installed.

Minimum Age 13+

Safety Features

There aren't any specific parental controls on Kik but it is recommended that parents help their teen to help use settings and filters available on Kik to help avoid dangers.

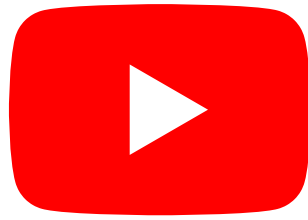
Mute or leave a video chat: In the Kik app, there is a feature 'New Chat'. When any user sends a message to your teen for the first time, they will get a notification and see these under 'New Chat'. If teens don't know the person mute or leave them.

Safety Issues **Unauthorized chatting** is common in Kik as anyone using Kik can send messages to other users without their permission. This could be dangerous as criminals may communicate with teens anonymously and could mislead them.

Unsafe content: There have been incidents of sex offenders harassing teens by sending sexual content. There are also known groups and people who promote nudity that isn't safe for teens using this app.

YouTube

Logo



Description

YouTube is a free, video sharing and social networking website and app on the internet. The website lets people upload, view, and share videos. 80% of teenagers and young people using the app regularly.

Minimum Age

13 + but under 18's need parental permission

Safety Features

Check their history - If you have access to your child's YouTube account, you can check their watch history. This is a list of previously watched videos that your child has viewed. You can check these to ensure the videos are safe for your child to view.

Watch videos with them - One of the best ways to understand how your child uses social media is to use it with them as an activity to do together. Instead of watching television together, you can ask your child to put on their favourite YouTuber to gain an idea of the type of content they are watching.

Private profiles - If your child is uploading content onto YouTube, they can make their profile private, which means that only those they invite can view their video and it will not be made public. This reduces the risk of hateful comments being left on their video. There is also the option to report and block users that have left hateful comments on videos to ensure that they are prevented from doing so in future.

YouTube

Safety Issues **Explicit content:** A lot of videos uploaded to YouTube contain content that is only appropriate for older age groups. This includes language such as swear words, inappropriate song lyrics, violence, and sexualised behaviour.

Cyberbullying through YouTube comments: The comments section on YouTube can often be a place of negativity, where people share hateful comments towards each other. These can be directed at the video creator or directed to another user who has written a comment.

Related videos: On the right-hand pane of the screen (on a laptop or computer), or below the video (on a small portable device), YouTube offers suggested videos to its users. This means that YouTube will suggest similar videos for you to watch next. Although this may seem helpful, YouTube does not always get this correct and may suggest other “off topic” videos that can lead to more inappropriate videos being found.

Challenge videos: There are often trends that circulate social media that encourage users to complete challenges. The challenges can be extremely harmful, and some videos can even target children specifically. For example, a child could watch a video that appears to be a popular cartoon, but included in the video can be harmful messages encouraging children to complete dangerous tasks.

Misinformation: YouTube, as with many social media apps, can be home to a lot of fake news or misinformation. The younger generation are increasingly likely to turn to their favourite YouTubers or influencers for their views on what is happening in the world; but content creators on YouTube cannot be classed as reputable sources.

Roblox

Logo



Description

Roblox is an online game creator system where the majority of the content is created by “amateur” game creators in Roblox studio. These game makers are able to create and publish games to the community using simple tools. And that means they can try ideas that wouldn’t get funded for a commercial release. These games can then be played by children worldwide, often online together, through a phone or tablet application or a web browser.

Minimum Age

13 +

Safety Features

Parental controls: There are parental controls that can be used in the game to ensure Roblox is super safe for younger players.

Limit games: To those curated by Roblox staff as follows:
Log in to [roblox.com](https://www.roblox.com), click the gear icon in the top right, select settings then security to enable the account restrictions slider.

Monitoring your child’s account: Roblox has several ways to monitor account activity. While logged in, you can view the following histories from their related sections: Direct and small group chat (Chat & Party feature found in the lower right corner of the apps). There you can see individual chat histories. This feature is limited to Friends and Friends of Friends. Private message history (Messages), Friends and Followers (Friends), Virtual item purchase and trade history (My Transactions, browser only).

Roblox

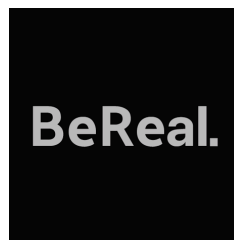
Safety Issues **Unauthorised spending:** Although Roblox is a free to play, children are incentivised to make purchases in the game with real money. Kids can purchase Robux for cash which is then spent on equipment and outfits in the games.

Parents need to ensure that they track and password-protect credit cards on your child's device, so no unanticipated purchases are made.

Inappropriate online interactions: Being an online game means that players in Roblox can interact and communicate with each other in various ways. This can be via voice or written text once friend requests have been made. This means that your teen may connect with older strangers or stumble across inappropriate content. Enhancing parental controls and privacy settings can help this. However, parents should note that this doesn't disable friend requests in Roblox. Therefore, it's important regularly check in on the Friend Requests page on the website to ensure strangers are not being accepted.

BeReal

Logo



Description

The BeReal app is a photo-sharing app that aims to be the polar opposite of an influencer-type social media lifestyle. Users get a two-minute window to snap on photo. The two-minute window is constantly changing times, creating a sense of spontaneity and preventing users from being able to stage photos. All users from the same geographical region get the same two-minute window. The app uses the phone camera to take a photo that is both forward and selfie facing so that other users can see a real-time authentic view of what the creator is experiencing.

Minimum Age 13 +

Safety Features

Reporting inappropriate content: BeReal's Terms of Use encourages users to report any content that is sexual or pornographic, or related to hate speech, extremism, violence, suicide or self-harm. Photos, RealMojis and comments can all be reported if they fall into these categories or breach other items on the Terms of Use. This includes spam and advertising as well as bullying and discrimination. However, the company itself is a hosting company, which means it is not required to monitor the information others post.

Limited posting time: Users can only post once per day, which helps to regulate the amount of time spent on the app especially when it comes to content they're posting.

Public forum: Users cannot contact others privately. Any comments are public for all to see.

BeReal

Safety Issues **Pictures are unmoderated:** This means that if your child is scrolling through the Discovery feed, they may come across an item someone posted that features inappropriate content. Additionally, RealMojis could feature the same kind of content. It's important that users report this kind of content if seen for review.

It's easy to connect with strangers: Some young people may send or receive friend requests from strangers through the Discovery tab if they are sharing with everyone. Once another user is on the 'Friends' list, they are able to comment on photos. They may also receive notifications about your posts. However, users can delete others from this list very easily.

Photos use the front and back camera: Although the user might point at one thing to photograph, the camera will also take a picture of the user themselves. It's important for young people to be aware of their surroundings to avoid posting anything they don't want online.

Twitter

Logo



Description

Twitter is a service for friends and family, to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. People post Tweets, which may contain photos, videos, links, and text. These messages are posted to your profile, sent to your followers, and are searchable on Twitter search.

Minimum Age 17+ (Over 13 can use twitter with parental permission)

Safety Features

Follow the hyperlink to download a comprehensive parents guide to twitter:
<https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/parent-controls-docs/parental-control-twitter.pdf>



Autoblock is Twitter's way of helping people control unwelcome interactions. When you activate Safety Mode, Twitter flags accounts with potentially abusive or spamming behaviour. Twitter automatically blocks accounts that engage in abusive or spammy behavior from interacting with you for 7 days.

Twitter

Safety Issues **Following is a one-way relationship:** Having Twitter followers is more like having fans than having Facebook friends. People can follow your teen even if your teen isn't following them – or doesn't even know who they are.

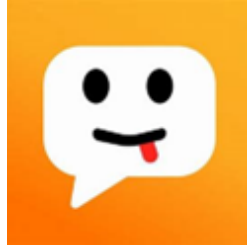
Tweets spread like wildfire: If a user sees a tweet of interest, Twitter encourages “re-tweeting” it. Tweets can and often do, go far beyond your teen's original group of followers.

Once posted, tweets can't be edited: Your teen can delete one of their tweets, but they can't change it. Deleting doesn't automatically delete all the re-tweets that have already been made.

Teens can talk privately with their followers: Sending out mass updates via tweet isn't the only way to communicate on Twitter. Teens can send a follower a direct message that is invisible to everyone on Twitter except for the two of them.

AddChat

Logo



Description

Addchat is an app to make online friends, and continue chatting with them by picture, text or audio that deletes by default.

Minimum Age 17+

Safety Features

Privacy Settings: You can adjust your privacy settings to control who can interact with you and see your content.

Safety Issues

Messages delete within 24 hours this means you have no record of what message you have received and what you have sent. This makes it very difficult to monitor what your child is exposed to. It also has a Random Chat function which means that people using the app can engage in random chats with other users. It is meant to put you in touch with people in your local area but it does not 'vet' people you are talking to so you could be talking to anyone.

What is the role of the Online Safety Ambassadors at LSA?

The Online Safety Ambassadors are a group of students who have an interest in online safety. Here at LSA the Online Safety Ambassadors have a monthly meeting with me where we discuss current trends and issues. They carry out research and help to keep track of worries and issues in regard to online safety. The Online Safety Ambassadors speak to the forms in their year groups to give important information. They most recently did this during online safety week. They help at events and assemblies. They can be recognised by their silver ties.

I hope you have found this resource and additional information to be useful.

If you have any concerns regarding online safety, please get in touch. I can be reached on karen.hagenaars@lsahigh.org

Kind regards

Karen Hagenaars
Leader for Online Safety
Teacher of English, Food Technology, Engineering and Computing
Lytham St Annes High School
"A learning community in pursuit of excellence"

t: 01253 733192

e: karen.hagenaars@lsahigh.org

w: www.lythamhigh.lancs.sch.uk