



Bredon Hill Academy

Safeguarding and Wellbeing Newsletter



Safeguarding Our Children Together

Spring
Term 2023

Welcome to the second Bredon Hill Academy Safeguarding and Wellbeing Newsletter of the academic year. The aim of this newsletter is to share with you any recent news items that might be relevant to keeping your child safe, share information to keep you informed and to highlight concerns that have been raised.

Polite Reminder!

We politely ask that you do not drop off your child at school before 8am. This is for health and safety reasons.

Thank you.



Social Media; Bad Influencers-Andrew Tate

It is not difficult to imagine harmful or abusive behaviours being present on social media. What can be challenging to deal with is the presence of popular online personalities or influencers who become well-known and even famous for exhibiting this behaviour over online platforms. This is especially concerning when children and young people begin to view this harmful content online.



Online safety experts have recently received reports of children as young as 11 quoting online personality Andrew Tate at school, even resulting in acts of violence towards female peers.

The following link takes you to a website that takes a closer look at Tate and the influence he is having on young men and boys.

<https://saferschoolsni.co.uk/harmful-content-andrew-tate/>

Supporting Our Families

We understand that at times you may require support in addition to what school offers on a daily basis. Please take a look at our Services Directory by clicking on the link below.

<https://www.bredon.worcs.sch.uk/page/?title=Supporting+Our+Families&pid=219>

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Mrs K Dunkley

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads: Miss D West, Mr S Timpson & Mrs J Miles-Kingston

Absence from School

ATTENDANCE

If your child is absent from school you can contact us in the following ways:

Email: absence@bredon.worcs.sch.uk

Contact form on the website: [Contact Us](#)

Or by calling 01386 881426

If your child is absent for more than one day, it is a requirement that you continue to update us on a daily basis.

If you require a leave of absence form please contact the school office on office@bredon.worcs.sch.uk or 01386 881426

Does Your Child Have a VR Headset?

With increasing popularity of Virtual Reality (VR) Headsets we wanted to share some of the potential risks that we are being made aware of:

- 1) Exposure to inappropriate content - a recent BBC study showed users are exposed to graphic sexual content, racism, sexism, and displays of violence in VR.
- 2) Lack of parental controls
- 3) Avatars creating a false sense of security during interactions
- 4) Persuasive design making it addictive
- 5) Physical side effects - nausea, disorientation, eye strain and headaches.
- 6) Mental duress - VR may make a young person experience emotional reactions to things that are not real, such as worry for safety or romantic attachments. This may result in negative effects on their mental health.
- 7) Physical injury - when the user is wearing a headset injury may be sustained due to not being aware of their physical surroundings.
- 8) Grooming - as adults and children can be in the same virtual place at the same time without censorship or intervention, many social aspects of the VR experience could create an environment for grooming (when an adult builds a relationship with a young person based on trust and connection in order to manipulate or abuse them).
Counsellors at Childline have highlighted the isolating nature of VR headsets and how easy it can be for predators to take advantage of anonymity.
- 9) Harassment - reports of virtual bullying, sexual harassment, and threats of violence are abundant within shared VR experiences. While this may come from strangers, there is also a possibility that real-world friends could become virtual tormentors.
- 10) Pornography and Prostitution - with the increased popularity of data gloves and VR suits, users are exposed to a Virtual World where porn and prostitution exist. Some user profiles/bios advertise what they are willing to perform sexually and their rates along with PayPal accounts

For more information on how to keep your child safe when using VR headsets, please click on the following link: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/virtual-reality-headsets/>

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Relationships and Sex Education Evening

Many thanks to all of you who attended our Relationships and Sex Education Evening last term. Lots of great discussions were had and ideas shared. We really do appreciate your attendance at these events.

As discussed, we use PHSE Association and NSPCC Relationship and Sex Education resources only when teaching about this topic. These are available for you to read, upon request. Please contact the office.

Mrs C Matthews

Vaping-Update

In my last newsletter, I wrote about how vaping has become popular amongst teenagers and young people. Some of our pupils are reporting that this is something they see regularly amongst older teens. Worryingly, many pupils know vapes are easily available, even for the under 18s. Please take the time to talk to your child about the risks involved with Vaping.

Pupils have been learning about and discussing this in Year 7 PSHE with Mrs Matthews



[Vaping: A New Trend Amongst Young People \(Link to Previous Article\)](#)

Anonymous Messaging Apps

Earlier this term, I emailed parents about the anonymous messaging/feedback app called Sendit. Sendit is a 'companion app' (apps which access contacts by working alongside other apps like SnapChat and Instagram) which allows users to communicate anonymously. Its popularity is increasing along with other apps of a similar nature. Due to the fact that users can communicate anonymously make these apps both appealing to young people but also very dangerous. Names to look out for are YOLO, Whisper, ASK FM, Omegle, Tellonym App, SayAt.Me App, Psst! Anonymous and NGL.



A quick guide for parents about NGL is attached to this newsletter

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about NGL

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

NGL (which stands for 'Not Gonna Lie') is an app through which users share a link to their Instagram story or Twitter account, inviting their followers to give anonymous feedback. The app includes some prewritten questions (such as 'if you could change anything about me, what would it be?'), plus the option to ask followers to simply 'send me anonymous messages'. All replies go into the user's NGL inbox, with the sender remaining anonymous – although subscribers to the app can receive hints about who each message was from.

ANONYMITY AND OVERSHARING

Anonymous messaging gives rise to the 'online disinhibition effect', which causes users to feel detached from their words and actions in the digital world. This can make young people in particular (as they tend to act more impulsively online) far more likely to disclose personal information on the internet, as well as making ill-advised confessions or revealing their fears and insecurities.

PROTECTION FOR BULLIES

Having their identity hidden makes bullies feel safe from repercussions, so anonymous chat sites are a major avenue for cyberbullying. NGL claims to use AI to filter out insulting terms, but our expert sent a range of such phrases (starting with 'cow' and 'ugly', and becoming progressively more offensive) to a 'dummy' account. All of these trial messages were delivered to the recipient's inbox.

COSTLY SUBSCRIPTIONS

NGL offers a subscription where – for a weekly fee – users can unlock hints about who's been messaging them, including the sender's approximate location and which device they used. Young people will naturally be extremely curious about who sent which message (especially if they have a lot of Instagram or Twitter followers) and may be unable to resist spending money to find out.

INFLATED ENGAGEMENT

1K

In June 2022, NGL had to revise its terms of service: informing users if a message was sent by the app's developers as opposed to genuine followers. It emerged that, previously, NGL's makers had attempted to boost engagement with the app (as well as enticing users to pay for subscriptions) by sending fake anonymous messages from bots. This update was rolled out very quietly by the team.

QUESTIONABLE SUPPORT

NGL does have a 'report this message' button for users to flag upsetting content. After sending a message, however, an automated reply arrives stating "...NGL is 100% anonymous and we have no way of knowing the identity of the user and would not be able to find out, even if we tried." This did not fill our expert with confidence that the app can address bad behaviour adequately.

ACCIDENTALLY GOING VIRAL

The messages on NGL itself are anonymous, but users can share these messages via their Instagram story or Twitter feed – enabling all their followers (or anyone, if their accounts are set to 'public') to see them. If a young person has disclosed something embarrassing or identifiable on NGL without realising, this information has the potential to be re-shared very quickly to a far wider audience.

Advice for Parents & Carers

DEALING WITH NEGATIVITY

Blocking another user on NGL will prevent them sending anonymous messages to your child in the short term – although a determined abuser could get around that obstacle simply by setting up a new Instagram account. If your child continually receives negative messages that upset them, it might be worth encouraging them to consider whether they really need to use the app at all.

EXPLAIN ANONYMOUS APPS

We understand that a conversation with your child about the risks of anonymous messaging may seem difficult to initiate (especially if you aren't that comfortable with using social media yourself). It is vital, however, that young people understand that, for some people, having their identity obscured online can make them feel more powerful and less accountable for their actions.

BLOCK IN-APP PURCHASES

To avoid your child running up an eye-watering bill through an NGL subscription (or indeed any kind of costly in-app purchases), go into the settings on whatever devices they use to go online and either disable the ability to make purchases or protect that function with a password. If those options aren't available, it's prudent to ensure there aren't any payment methods linked to their account.

THINK BEFORE SENDING

Regardless of whether a messaging app is anonymous or not, it's a good idea to regularly talk to your child about how it's wise to think through what they're sharing before they post it. Emphasise that nothing is truly private once it's online. If the post is something your child might hesitate to say to someone face to face, then it's probably not the sort of thing they should be writing online either.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



NOS National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

Source: https://ngl.link/#what-s_ngl

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