**At Summerhill School we are committed to Safeguarding our children and young people as well as promoting positive well-being for all.**
This Safeguarding newsletter, aims to help staff, parents and students alike to be aware of the safeguarding and mental health issues, giving you useful links and resources to use if you have concerns. If you have concerns or ideas for future topics please do not hesitate to contact us on the main school number 01384 816165 or via email on studentssupport@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk

## Vent App

Online safety experts have received reports from our Safer School partners about a peer support app that could be reinforcing harmful behaviour. Vent markets itself towards children and young people as a platform where they can express themselves, "chill out" and have their mood "lifted". Vent is an online platform designed to be a "social diary" for users to share their feelings with one. There are very few effective safety settings on Vent, and all moderation seems to be based on users reporting inappropriate posts. Vent states that users can only post to the app if they are 'aged 13 years or older'. However, other ratings suggest 16+ or 17+ age limits, as the app may include "suggestive themes" such as profanity/crude humour, mild sexual content, nudity, and drug use reference – content that is not suitable for Vent's suggested age rating. If you would like to read more, head to this link - Safe Schools Vent App Article

## Young Minds

We know parenting isn't always easy. Although it's often amazing and rewarding to watch your children grow up, and to help them learn to be independent, it can also be really hard work. It can feel especially hard if your child's mood and behaviour seem different and you're not sure why, or what you can do to help. But you are not alone. Young Minds is a website full of helpful advice from how to encourage your child to open up abut their feelings to dealing with mental health services. No Matter what you and your child are going through, things can get better. Here is the link to Young Minds if you would like to take a further look.
https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/

YOUNGMiNDS
fighting for young people's mental health

## Social Media 101

Social media platforms constantly evolve, with even the most popular platforms seeing fluctuations in engagement. Whether the child in your care uses Instagram, TikTok or any new platforms, understanding the key features will help you grasp the appeal and recognise associated risks. See the poster below for more information.

Mrs Sprouting
Designated
Safeguarding
Lead

Mr Randle
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead

Ms Gordon
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead

Mr Quirke
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead

Mr Cresswell
Deputy
Safeguarding
Lead

# SOCIAL MEDIA 101

Social media platforms constantly evolve, with even the most popular platforms seeing fluctuations in engagement. Whether the child in your care uses Instagram, TikTok, or any new platform, understanding the key features will help you grasp the appeal and recognise associated risks.

## 10 FEATURES OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

### User Hashtags & Trends
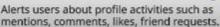Hashtags help categorise and organise content, making it discoverable by users interested in specific topics.

### User Profiles
Personal profiles are online identities, with usernames, bios, profile pics, and optional details.

### Interactions & Engagement
Interactions between users such as likes, reactions, comments, shares or reposts.

### Search & Discovery
Search finds accounts, hashtags, topics, and trending content. Discovery suggests new content based on interests.

### Notifications
Alerts users about profile activities such as mentions, comments, likes, friend requests.

### Newsfeeds/Timelines
Displays content shared by users and the accounts they follow, tailored to user preferences, connections, and interactions.

### Posting & Sharing
Text, photos, videos, links, and articles shared with online connections or publicly.

### Privacy & Security Settings
Options to control privacy, audiences, viewing permissions, and account security.

### Connecting & Following
Connections through friend/follow requests keep users updated on activities and content. Connections may be mutual (both users follow each other) or one-sided (one user follows another without reciprocation).

Something we are starting to see more of is the integration of AI as a more visible feature on social media platforms.

### Messaging & Communications
Direct messages, group chats, voice/video calls facilitate communication between users.

NO AGE RATING

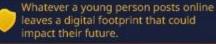Platform age ratings: Snapchat 13, Instagram 13, TikTok 13, WhatsApp 13, Telegram 16, Messenger 13, Twitch 13, Discord 13, BeReal. (no age rating), Facebook 13, X 13, Roblox -, Reddit 13

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# ⚠️ RISKS AND TOP TIPS ✅

## Age Verification
- 🛡️ Most platforms have age ratings to stop users viewing age-inappropriate content.
- ⚠️ Not all platforms have robust verification methods.
- ✅ Ensure young people are registered as the correct age (a 12 year old who registers as 16 will see content designed for an adult after two years)

  YOTI

  Look for platforms using YOTI as their age verification method. This facial scanning technology is harder to get around than most other methods.

## End-to-End Encryption 🔒
- 🛡️ This ensures a message between the sender and recipient can't be viewed by anyone else - even the police or hackers!
- ⚠️ Encryption provides an opportunity for predators to groom young users without detection.
- ✅ Make sure they understand what to do if someone is making them feel uncomfortable.

  Talk to young people about accepting requests or adding people they don't know.

## Digital Footprint
- 🛡️ Whatever a young person posts online leaves a digital footprint that could impact their future.
- ⚠️ Universities, friends, and even employers might come across their previous online activity.
- ✅ Help your child set up their accounts so that posts are visible only to friends and not the public.

  Make sure a young person only posts content they would be comfortable with anyone seeing.
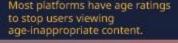
## Algorithms
- 🛡️ The content a user interacts with or searches for influences what they will see next.
- ⚠️ This may affect an impressionable young person's thoughts and actions.
- Understand that one piece of harmful content can lead to the algorithm showing you more.
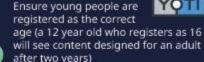- ✅ Keep in mind the negativity bias. Just like staring at a car crash on the road, it doesn't imply a desire for more or an enjoyment of it, but rather reflects how our brains tend to focus on the negative for longer.
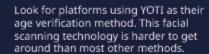
## Persuasive Design
- 🛡️ Clever design features keep users engaged on social media platforms for longer, through things like the endless scroll or push notifications.
- ⚠️ This can lead to excessive screen-time and in some cases, addiction.
- Agree screentime limits with young people to promote a healthy balance between offline and online activities.
- ✅ Encourage them to recognise when they are being influenced to stay online.

## Personal Information
- 🛡️ Information such as full names, locations, or other platform usernames are frequently shared on social media.
- ⚠️ Sharing this information may seem harmless to young people, but can be exploited by predators and cybercriminals for harmful purposes.
- Ensure children know what is appropriate to share online and what isn't.
- ✅ Make sure they know that bios can be seen by everyone, even with a private account.
- Remind them to scan their photos for anything that could identify them before they are posted.