



# Safe At Summerhill

**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](mailto:studentssupport@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk)

## Time to Talk Day – 01/02/24

What is Time to Talk Day? Time to Talk Day is the nation's biggest mental health conversation. Happening every year, it's a day for friends, families, communities, and workplaces to come together to talk, listen and change lives. Time to Talk Day 2024 will take place 1 February 2024. It's run by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness and is being delivered in partnership with Co-op for the third year running. Across the UK, it's delivered by See Me in Scotland, Inspire in Northern Ireland and Time to Change Wales. The more conversations we have, the better life is for everyone. Talking about mental health isn't always easy and sometimes it's even harder to say how you really feel. But a conversation has the power to change lives. Time to Talk Day is the perfect opportunity to start a conversation about mental health. If you would like to find out more please see this link - <https://timetotalkday.co.uk/about/>

## Game Safe

NSPCC introduce their new 'Game Safe' festival takes place in February and features a range of workshops and an in-person esports safeguarding conference which covers child protection within the gaming industry. They're inviting professionals, parents and gamers to attend our new Game Safe festival, which aims to raise awareness and educate parents, carers and professionals on how to keep children safe while playing games online, as well as providing fundraising opportunities. Recent report found an 82% rise in online grooming crimes against children in the last 5 years. With 89% of children in the UK playing video games, we're committed to ensuring that online protections extend to gaming platforms too. The Game Safe festival, taking place on the 5th – 11th February, is launched with the support of several key partners. This includes Vodafone, who has partnered with the festival and will feature across the week to promote the work they're doing with us to ensure every child has a happy and safe online life. Also supporting Game Safe is The British Esports Federation, who is advising on the esports activation.

## Persuasive Design Online

For many companies who operate in the online space, attention and engagement are the holy grail. Social media sites in particular make deliberate creative choices to keep people scrolling, reading, watching and clicking. This phenomenon is known as 'persuasive design' and it's being employed in the vast majority of the digital world's most popular destinations. A study by the charity 5Rights Foundation concluded that "...the brain's response to rewards and punishments can be leveraged through persuasive design to keep children online." To tie in with Safer Internet Day 2024, our #WakeUpWednesday guide can help to educate youngsters on the effects of persuasive design – and suggests ways to insulate themselves from its influence.



**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



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about PERSUASIVE DESIGN ONLINE

'Persuasive design' refers to the techniques that companies employ to influence our thoughts and behaviours when we're on the internet. These approaches can be spotted on websites, in apps and even as part of some video games. Persuasive design means that this content has been deliberately presented in a way that's intended to encourage you to spend your time or money (or both). These methods often prove highly effective at keeping people engaged and invested for longer than we might expect.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### POTENTIAL ADDICTION

In the digital world, persuasive design can make certain activities more addictive and harder to walk away from: some people may begin to feel anxious or irritated without access to their device or their favourite app, for example. It can also often leave users feeling isolated, as – if they spend most of their time on social media – they may start to find it difficult to talk to other people in real life.

### MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Scrolling online or gaming without regular breaks is proven to be harmful to our mental health. The constant bombardment of news stories (many of them negative), images and influencers' posts can create sensations of unease, uncertainty and FOMO (fear of missing out). Young people can get so immersed in this environment that they become less likely to spot misleading posts.

### PROLONGED SCROLLING

Social media can draw any of us – regardless of age – into a continuous pattern of refreshing our screen, following posts and links down rabbit holes or reading countless comments made by others. This aimless scrolling can eat up time which could have been spent on more productive activities. It could also lead younger users into areas of the online world which aren't age appropriate.

### SENSORY OVERLOAD

Repetitively scrolling, clicking on links or playing games can create an unending stream of new information and visual stimuli. Put it this way: social media isn't exactly renowned as a carefree, chilled-out environment. Such overstimulation can become too much for young people to handle, resulting in sensory overload and causing them to feel stressed, overwhelmed and exhausted.

### COSTLY ADDITIONS

Video games sometimes display offers for downloadable content or loot boxes which can be bought with real money. While these 'microtransactions' temptingly promise to improve a player's gaming experience, most of the time they are money sinks. Young people in particular, excited by the chance of enhancing their game, could spend quite a sizeable sum very quickly indeed.

### PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

Hours spent sitting and scrolling means far less time moving around and getting exercise: hardly ideal for a young person's physical health. Additionally, prolonged exposure to the light given off by a phone's screen can lead to eye fatigue and discomfort, especially if viewing it in the dark. Extended phone use before bed can also impact on sleep quality, affecting mood and energy levels over the following days.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### ESTABLISH LIMITS

Talk to your child about setting some time limits on how long they can use their phone, tablet or console in the evenings or at weekends – or perhaps how often they can go on a specific app, game or website. You could also decide to involve the whole family in creating this shared screen time agreement, making things fair (and healthier) for everyone.

### NIX NOTIFICATIONS

Stop knee-jerk responses at the source by turning off push notifications and alerts. Whether it's a gaming notification or a social media update, these not-so-gentle reminders are designed to catch our attention and lure us back to our device. Switching them off – or even deleting any particularly intrusive apps – can help prevent your child from being reeled back into the online world.

### ENCOURAGE MINDFULNESS

Acknowledging any addiction is key in overcoming it – and compulsive scrolling is no different. If anything mentioned in this guide sounds familiar, it could help to have an honest, open chat with your child about how much time they spend online. Get them to think about how often they scroll through social media aimlessly or habitually open it up whenever they have a spare moment.

### MAKE A CHECKLIST

Considering a list of relevant questions can be an effective way of helping children figure out why they're scrolling on certain sites or consuming particular pieces of content. A checklist can prompt young people to ask themselves if they're learning anything or benefiting from this activity – or if they're wasting their time. Taking a step back can sometimes help us to see things more clearly.

## Meet Our Expert

Rebecca Jennings has more than 20 years' experience in the field of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). As well as delivering workshops and training for young people, parents and schools, she is also a subject matter expert on RSHE for the Department of Education.



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#WakeUpWednesday