



SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

Autumn Half-Term Two 2024/25

We are already nearing the end of the first term of the academic year. This has been a packed half-term as students have celebrated events such as Anti-bullying Week, Interfaith Month and Road Safety Week.

This newsletter contains important safety information regarding a concerning WhatsApp group, so please read the details and report as necessary.

We are also appealing for your contributions to the annual mental health audit and would be grateful for your feedback.

Finally, there are details of other support services, such as the HAF programme when school closes for the holidays. We hope you find it useful.

Kind regards,

Ms Jones and the Keep Kids Safe team.

KEY NUMBERS

Anyone can contact the services below directly, regardless of whether you are a child, parent, carer or a member of staff. If you have a safeguarding concern, please ensure you pass it on: safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

01925 443322 (Option one, followed by option one) Warrington Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) For urgent safeguarding concerns about a child	01925 443322 (Option two) Out of Office Emergency Duty Team For urgent safeguarding concerns about a child outside of office hours	0808 800 5000 NSPCC For adults who are worried about a child
0800 1111 Childline For children who are worried about their own safety or need some advice	101 Police Non-Emergency For reporting any crimes or concerns	999 Emergency Services For anyone in immediate danger (including if you are worried about the immediate risk to a child)



Keeping Kids Safe



Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass is an initiative that was launched in 2011, aimed at enabling schools to support children who may have witnessed domestic abuse.

The scheme means that a key person at school receives an email informing them that an incident involving domestic abuse has taken place. This then enables schools to ensure that all appropriate support is put in place for that child. Further information is provided in the adjacent image. It is important for parents/carers to be aware of this initiative so that we can support families as a whole.

Operation Encompass is a national scheme that operates jointly between schools and all police forces.

OPERATION ENCOMPASS

“Children who live in homes where there is domestic abuse, or who experience domestic abuse in their own teenage relationships, can be negatively impacted by this experience.”

“Children who experience domestic abuse are recognised as victims of domestic abuse in their own right!”

“We have ensured that a member of our staff, (Designated Safeguarding Lead) known as a Key Adult, has been trained about Operation Encompass procedures. This allows us to use the information that has been confidentially shared with us by the police, to understand how a child may be impacted by domestic abuse and to then offer support to the child/ren in our care.”

“Operation Encompass means that our school will be told, prior to the start of the next school day, when police have attended an incident of domestic abuse where there is a child or young person who attends our school who is related to any of those involved in the incident.”

“This information means that we can understand a child's behaviour and support that child in whatever way they may need or want.”

“We are keen to offer the very best support possible to all our pupils and we believe that being part of Operation Encompass helps us to do this.”

www.operationencompass.org

© Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Anti-Bullying Week

School celebrated Anti-Bullying Week during 11th – 15th November. We were pleased to welcome visitors from Warrington Youth for Christ, who delivered a rousing and impactful performance for Years 7-9. This engaging session is designed to help students to reflect on the impact of bullying and encourage positive peer relationships. The theme for this year is 'Choose Respect', and students have received assemblies unpicking what this means. Students were asked to imagine a world where respect, kindness and compassion thrive, and encouraged to treat others with these attributes (as well as our PRIDE values) in mind. More information on this is provided in the infographic at the end of this newsletter.

Online Filtering and Monitoring

Keeping children safe online is an imperative priority for school. Whilst we encourage parents/carers to monitor their children's personal devices/online activity, school also have a responsibility to ensure that children are behaving safely online when it comes to school computers. We would therefore like to make parents/carers aware that we use a highly intelligent filtering and monitoring software called Senso. This provides live alerts to the Keep Kids Safe team whenever anything concerning is typed by a student. Staff can see screenshots of what children have typed and act accordingly to support them from there. If a safeguarding matter has arisen through this, we will always inform parents/carers so that we can work together to keep the children safe.



Social Media Concerns

School have been made aware of WhatsApp group entitled "Add People". The group contains hundreds of children, and has very inappropriate content, such as naked images of AI adults. It is believed that very young children have been added to the group, and as the title suggests, the aim is to add as many other children as possible. This has been reported to us by another school; we are not aware of any Padgate Academy students being added to this group as yet, however strongly advise that parents/carers check their child's phone. The group has been reported to the police.



Support Services



Mental Health Support Team Survey

As you may be aware, we are lucky enough to be one of the schools in the area who have access to the Mental Health Support Team (MHST), who are a service which provide evidence-based interventions to students who may be experiencing difficulties with issues such as anxiety and low mood. They are a hugely valuable service: not only do they provide 1:1 interventions with students, they have also worked closely with our student mental health ambassadors, providing in-depth training to them so that they are able to support their peers.

To further their support, the MHST would like to complete an annual audit of mental health provision in school. As part of this, they will be capturing the voice of students, staff, and would also like to hear from parents/carers. We would greatly appreciate it if you could contribute to this by completing this survey: <https://forms.office.com/e/ewDx1neZ1Q>. School do not see the responses as these are collated by the MHST, however the general results are collated and shared with school once the audit is completed. Many thanks in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Holiday and Food Programme (HAF)

The HAF programme will be running over the Christmas holidays in Warrington. The scheme is accessible to any child aged 5-16 years who is entitled to free school meals. There are spaces available at a reduced rate for those children that are not eligible for benefit related free school meals.

Each local programme will provide delicious, healthy meals, allow kids to get active, help them learn new things, make friends and have fun. Bookings are now live on the website: there are multi sports camps, a pantomime performance, science and nature workshops, arts and crafts and skateboarding. For those wanting support but not wanting to attend activities, there are meal boxes available so that they family can cook together in the home. To see what is available and book a place, please visit:

<https://www.warrington.gov.uk/find-and-book-haf-sessions-your-area>

A promotional banner for the HAF2024 programme. The top half has a blue background with white text: 'In Warrington we're running a free holiday club programme for children on free school meals. #HAF2024'. The bottom half has a red background with white text: 'HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME'. On the right side, there is a photo of two smiling children, a girl and a boy. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for the Department for Education.

Early Help Advice Sessions

We have been extremely pleased with the response from parents engaging with our Early Help drop-in advice sessions so far this year. All three sessions that we have offered so far have been fully booked.

Our next available session will be held on **18th December between 9.30am – 12pm.**

If you would like to book an appointment with our Early Help link partnership worker, please contact Ms Jones on kjones@padgateacademy.co.uk.

We hope you have found this newsletter useful. For further safeguarding information, please visit the school website: <https://padgateacademy.co.uk/safeguarding>

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about IN-GAME CHAT

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Video games are continuing to grow in popularity – including, of course, among children and young people – and the emergence of gaming communities has been accelerated by the inclusion of chat functionality across many different titles. While in-game chat isn't inherently a bad thing, it can create some concerns about online safety and the people that children might be interacting with.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHAT

There are a number of ways that gamers commonly chat with one another online. As the name would suggest, in-game chat happens within the game itself. There's also party chat: a group voice conversation that console users can have with anyone on the same platform. This tends to be more commonly used by players who already know each other. Finally, many gamers – especially on PC – will chat via a third-party app such as Discord.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

Whether it's text- or voice-based, in-game chat is frequently open to all players to use. Many games default to making it an opt-in function, but some don't meaning a child could start seeing messages within the game from people they're playing with, regardless of whether they know those individuals or not. While most strangers won't necessarily have ill intent, there are some who may behave inappropriately when chatting to a child – intentionally or otherwise.

DANGER OF GROOMING

It's been reported that some young gamers have encountered older players online who pretend to be a lower age to manipulate children, sending gifts in exchange for chatting and sending photos. Just as on any messaging platform, it's good to advise young people to avoid speaking to strangers; emphasise that they shouldn't accept gifts from anyone online that they don't know.

BULLYING AND ABUSE

While some in-game chat can turn toxic because of how a match plays out, others turn that way because of people who engage in trolling – in essence, behaving in an offensive and abusive way simply to cause pain or get a rise out of whoever they're talking to. These 'trolls' often lean on racial slurs, anti-LGBT sentiment and other hateful rhetoric; they normally feel most confident preying on younger, more impressionable gamers.

POTENTIAL FOR PRIVATE CHAT

If a player would like a re-match with a stranger after meeting them in the game, they can send a friend request, or use the party chat together in the future. For the most part, this is harmless – but it might lead to messages being exchanged in private. This could then escalate to the sharing of private information, and potentially attempts to manipulate or scam younger players.

COMPETITIVE ATMOSPHERE

Certain games are very competitive, and players can sometimes get upset if they feel a teammate is underperforming, an opponent won unfairly, or they're just a bad loser. This can lead to unpleasant messages that stray away from playful 'trash talk' and wander into the territory of bullying. Some players have been known to get incredibly abusive in situations like this, and the impact of this on a young gamer's emotional wellbeing could be severe.

Advice for Parents & Educators

LOCK-DOWN IN-GAME CHAT

In-game chat can often be disabled in the game's settings. This allows children to play without risk of contact from strangers – but it will need to be done in each individual game. Text chat appears in the corner of the screen in many titles, so it's normally easy to take a quick glance and see what's being said. With voice chat, explain to children what behaviour is inappropriate, so they can spot the dangers themselves.

REPORT POTENTIAL OFFENDERS

Most games offer a robust means of reporting other players, so you can flag an account as potentially harmful. This normally leads to the account not being matched with yours in the future and, if that person's conduct breaks any of the game's rules, they may be banned from playing entirely. This is done within the game itself, so each title has a slightly different process, but these tend to be designed for simplicity.

CONSIDER OTHER CHAT OPTIONS

If a child wants to play with people they know, consider using party chat or a third-party service like Discord. This allows everyone involved to chat on a private server and even enjoy each other's company while playing different games. It's also far more secure, as anyone looking to join will need to request and be granted access – normally by whoever is hosting the chat.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Make sure children understand the differences between being competitive and being abusive. Talk about what constitutes unusual or inappropriate behaviour from strangers online. Be clear that if anything ever concerns or worries them, they should tell a trusted adult as soon as possible. Empower children to identify the risks of in-game chat for themselves and reassure them they won't get in trouble for seeking help if anything goes wrong.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is the Editor in Chief of GGRecon and has been working in the games media industry for five years. He's also a parent and therefore understands the importance of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his work has been published at sites including IGN, TechRadar, and plenty more.



The National College®

Source: See full reference list on guide page at nationalcollege.com/guides/in-game-chat



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10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO CHOOSE RESPECT

Sometimes, differences between children can escalate into bullying, potentially impacting their mental health in a way that can persist into adulthood. While it's natural to disagree sometimes, teaching children the importance of respect is essential – especially in difficult situations. This guide provides strategies for encouraging considerate behaviour, even during a dispute, to foster a kinder, more inclusive environment for everyone.

1 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

As adults, we play a crucial role in modelling respectful behaviour for children: they observe and learn from our actions every day. Be mindful of the way you interact with others in front of children. Keep in mind that you should always approach others with an attitude of mutual respect, even if you disagree with them. Demonstrating this behaviour can influence young people and help them to handle their own conflicts in a healthy way.

2 AGREE TO DISAGREE

Make sure children know that it's fine to have differing opinions – and that disagreeing with someone doesn't mean you can't get along or respect each other's point of view. Help them understand that sometimes we can 'agree to disagree'. Using active listening skills when doing this can also help to build empathy and understanding of others.

3 PROMOTE ACTIVE LISTENING

Teach children about the importance of active listening: that is, making a genuine effort to listen to the other person's perspective without interrupting, before responding in a way that shows you understand their viewpoint, even (or perhaps especially) if you disagree with it. This makes people feel respected and allows for a better comprehension of their point of view, which in turn can make it easier for you to communicate your own opinions to them.

4 ENCOURAGE THE USE OF "I" STATEMENTS

If a child finds themselves in a disagreement with someone, it can be useful to encourage them to use "I" statements during the discussion. Framing their thoughts and feelings using statements like "I feel ..." or "I think ..." can help them avoid an accusatory tone and encourages them to take responsibility for their own emotions.

5 FOCUS ON BEHAVIOUR, NOT CHARACTER

When disagreements happen, encourage children to focus on critiquing and addressing the specific actions or behaviours that caused this upset, rather than attacking the person's character. For example, "I didn't like how you interrupted me" is better than "You're so rude". This can help children avoid hurting someone's feelings, which is likely to inflame the situation.

6 STAY CALM AND TAKE BREAKS

It's perfectly normal to feel upset during a disagreement – especially if it's getting heated. Remind children that if they feel overwhelmed, they should try to take deep breaths or even go for a short break to help them stay composed. If a conversation becomes too intense, remind them it's OK to suggest continuing it later or in a different setting. This can prevent things getting out of hand, allowing cooler heads to prevail.

7 START CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RESPECT

Talk openly to children about what respect means – to you and to them. Discuss how they might show respect to each other, to friends, to strangers and even to people we might disagree with. You could use examples of considerate or inconsiderate behaviour in books, films or TV to open discussions about the importance of giving others due regard.

8 SEEK COMMON GROUND

When a disagreement has occurred between children, they may find it hard to move past it. You can support them in finding a more positive way forward by helping identify areas of agreement or common ground with the other party. This can help to build bridges between differing opinions and foster a more cooperative atmosphere, as well as preventing those involved from demonising each other.

9 AVOID MAKING THINGS PERSONAL

It's important that we make it clear to children they must avoid name-calling, swearing or derogatory remarks in a disagreement with others. Respectful language sets a positive tone and helps keep the conversation productive. Reminding children to stay calm and take breaks – as mentioned previously – can help them avoid getting too emotional and saying or doing something hurtful.

10 REFLECT AND LEARN

After a child has had a disagreement, encourage them to reflect on the experience and think about what they can learn from it. What did they handle well? How might they improve their communication skills to handle conflicts more effectively in the future? You could use role play, writing and drawing pictures, or hypothetical examples to further develop their skills in showing respect during a disagreement.

Meet Our Expert

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) co-ordinate Anti-Bullying Week each year. ABA is a unique coalition of organisations and individuals, working together to achieve their vision to stop bullying and create safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn. They welcome membership from any organisation or individual that supports this vision and support a free network of thousands of schools and colleges.



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Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/choose-respect>

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