



13 March 2026

Dear Parents and Children

In this Sunday's Gospel, we read about how Jesus brought healing and light into the life of the man who was born blind.

The man could then see the world around him, but the most important thing he saw was who Jesus really was - the Son of God.

Difficulties, worries and sickness can sometimes be part of our lives. Yet, when we believe in Jesus and we pray and look carefully, we can often learn something about the world and ourselves, and about how Jesus is always there for us.

Jesus is the light of the world. Believing in him brings light to our lives; it changes how we see the world and it can bring healing to us too.

Come and see!

In your family prayer time this week, you may wish to reflect on the Gospel reading. Praying to Jesus helps us to see him and to see what he is doing in our lives. Tell Jesus about someone you know who would like to see change in their lives.

Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.
St Thomas More

Dear Lord Jesus, help us to see you more clearly - to believe in you and to share your light and healing with all those around us.
Amen.



God bless

Mrs Titus

Safeguarding

If you have any concerns for the safety and well-being of any child, please make an appointment to see Mrs Studd who is our Designated Safeguarding Lead.

In an emergency, please call the police without delay.

We can also help parents through Brent's Early Help Assessment process. If you are having difficulties with housing, finances or health, please speak with Mrs Studd who can signpost you to appropriate support and services.

Click here for information from the NSPCC on **Positive Parenting**

Click here for Brent **Citizens Advice**

Useful Contacts:

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Brent Social Services:
020 8937 4300

Community Dates

15 Mar Mothering Sunday

16 Mar Neurodiversity
Celebration Week

17 Mar St Patrick's Day

19 Mar St Joseph's Day

Celebrations

We are always very happy to share news about the children's achievements outside of school.

Please email details and photos to:

info@stjo.brent.sch.uk

**St Joseph's
Roman Catholic
Primary School**

020 8965 5651

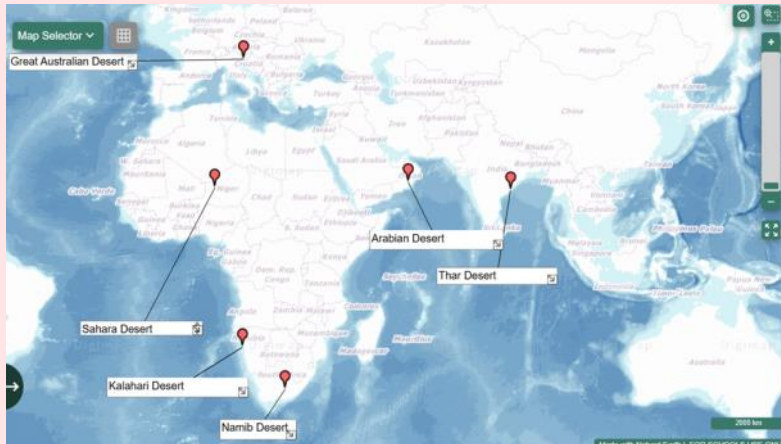
admin@stjo.brent.sch.uk

www.stjosephsrc.co.uk

News from Year 3

The Year 3 children have been learning about deserts in their Geography lessons during this spring term. They engaged in lots of activities throughout the unit, learning about what deserts are, where deserts are located, the features of deserts and how some animals and humans can survive in the desert.

The children used digital mapping software to locate deserts across the world, identifying the continent and countries that they are in and then locating and labelling them on a digital map. They also drew their own sketch maps of deserts, using aerial photographs and their knowledge of the features of deserts to help them.



“Deserts are arid places because they do not get much precipitation.”

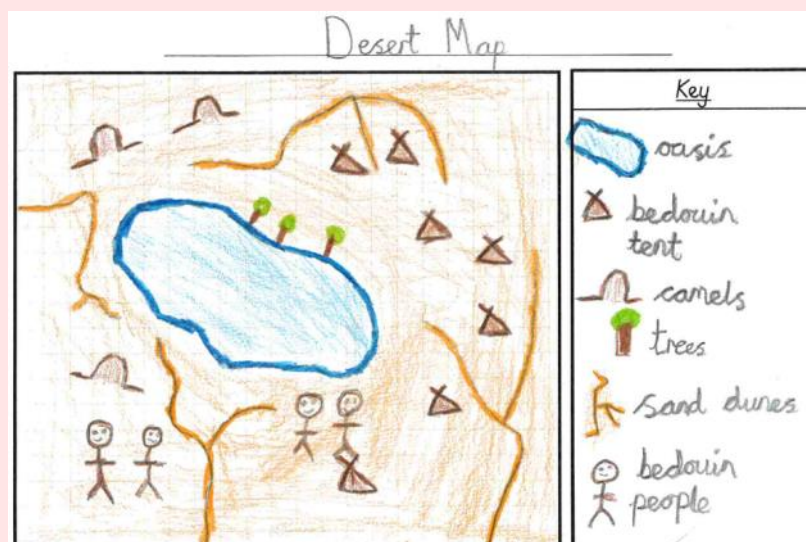
“Antarctica is a desert. It does not have sand dunes but it does have ice sheets.”

“Sand dunes are formed when the wind picks up the sand and drops it to make different shapes.”

“There are rocks in some deserts, like mesas, mushroom rocks, arches and pillars.”

“Some animals that live in deserts are camels, thorny devils, meerkats and penguins.”

“Penguins survive in deserts because they drink seawater and their bodies can remove the salt from the water so they don't get sick.”



Year 3 Educational Visit

The year 3 children visited the Twist Museum on Oxford Street. They became immersed in the exhibits which helped them to understand how the eye interprets colour, light and patterns to create optical illusions.



They also visited the Cartoon Museum and participated in a caricatures workshop. They learned different techniques to draw facial features in a caricature style and created their own caricatures of superheroes and well-known figures.



World Book Day

A huge congratulations to our World Book Day costume winners - your creativity and effort truly stood out! We were so impressed by the fantastic range of characters brought to life across the school today. From handmade outfits to clever details, it was clear how much thought and enthusiasm went into every costume.



A big thank you to everyone who made World Book Day such a wonderful celebration in our school. From the fantastic costumes to the engaging classroom activities, it was lovely to see so much enthusiasm for books and reading throughout the day.

We were so impressed by the creativity and effort pupils put into bringing their favourite characters to life. Don't forget that your World Book Day book tokens can still be used, so make sure to choose a new book to enjoy.

Keep the reading going and continue exploring the amazing worlds that books can take you to!



Church End Green Corridors Project

Recently, some of our children took part in an outdoor workshop in collaboration with Brent Council and Energy Garden. They helped plant in a rain garden in our local area, learning about sustainability, biodiversity, and how green spaces can help manage rainwater and support the environment.



I liked planting the flowers because it helps bees and butterflies. Beatrice
I didn't know gardens could stop flooding. It was cool to learn how the rain garden works. Kyna

My favourite part was digging the soil and planting the plants with my friends." Mathew



It made me feel proud because we were helping the environment in our community. Isabella

I learned that plants can soak up rainwater and help the earth. Axl
It was fun being outside and doing real work instead of just learning about it in class.. Aidan

Now when I walk past the garden, I can say that I helped plant it.. Ray
I want to plant something at home now to help nature. Oliver

Cycling Lives Empowering Minds

Highlights:

Cycle Awareness Course

- Build confidence
- Learn basic bike maintenance
- Gain essential safety awareness
- Balance, glide, pedal, and observe with skill
- All safety gear provided
- 5 weeks rolling enrollment-no-one misses out



MONDAYS :

4:30–5:30 PM Beginners

5:30–6:30 PM Confident Riders

Location: Jason Roberts Foundation (Pavilion), Stonebridge
Recreation Ground, London NW10 6LW

Contact: esherinnerbeing@gmail.com / 07931 787161



Cycle Inner-Sense
CYCLING LIVES EMPOWERING MINDS



Jason Roberts
Foundation



CO-OP MEMBERS CAN SUPPORT LOCAL PROJECTS

Choose our cause so we can help more people in your community.

seeds



Seeds for Growth charity was launched in 2006. We deliver many projects to enhance quality of life by improving health, wellbeing and access to outdoor, community spaces.



Pupil-led
fruit tuck
shops in
schools



Art and craft focussed
workshops in prisons
Europe-wide



500
convenience
stores
supported to
sell fresh
health food



600 new
housing estate
community
gardens to be
launched
annually



Volunteer run
food Co-ops,
provide fresh,
healthy fruit and
vegetables for
thousands of
residents



Bollywood
dance
classes for
women

Scan the QR code,
download the Co-op
App or visit [coop.co.uk/
membership](http://coop.co.uk/membership) to learn
how you can support us



seeds



www.seedsforgrowth.org.uk

co op

OWNED BY YOU.
RIGHT BY YOU.



STAR

Supporting the
Assessment
Route



*Is your child on the waiting list
to be assessed for Autism or Autism & ADHD?*

Come to one of our... **Family Wellbeing Centre** **drop-in sessions**

- An opportunity to discuss any concerns, you may have about your child.
- If we do not know the answer, we will signpost you to a service who can help.
- Confidential support.



Please register to use the FWC at

www.brent.gov.uk

In the search box type;

FAMILY WELLBEING CENTRES

Click on the 'Register' button.

We can support with this on arrival.

Willow

Barnhill Road
Wembley
HA9 9DF

Tuesday 9th September 2025 at 12pm-2pm

Tuesday 10th February 2026 at 12pm-2pm

Tuesday 21st April 2026 at 12pm-2pm

Church Lane

Fryent Primary
School
Church Lane
Kingsbury
NW9 8JD

Tuesday 4th November 2025 at 10am-12pm

Tuesday 12th May 2026 at 10am-12pm

Tuesday 7th July 2026 at 10am-12pm

Three Trees

Tiverton Road
Kensal Rise
NW10 3HL

Tuesday 21st October 2025 at 10am - 12pm

Tuesday 24th February 2026 at 10am - 12pm

Tuesday 28th April 2026 at 10am - 12pm

Granville Plus

78 Granville Road
Kilburn
NW6 5RA

Monday 24th November 2025 at 10am - 12pm

Monday 18th May 2026 at 10am - 12pm

Monday 20th July 2026 at 10am - 12pm

Alperton

Alperton Community
School
Ealing Road
Wembley
HA0 4PW

Friday 10th October 2025 at 10am-12pm

Friday 13th March 2026 at 10am-12pm

Friday 19th June 2026 at 10am-12pm

Fawood

35 Fawood Avenue
NW10 8GP

Friday 26th September 2025 at 12pm-2pm

Friday 16th January 2026 at 12pm-2pm

Friday 22nd May 2026 at 12pm-2pm

St Raphael's

Rainsborough Close
St Raphael's Estate
NW10 0TS

Tuesday 18th November 2025 at 10am - 12pm

Tuesday 17th March 2026 at 10am - 12pm

Tuesday 19th May 2026 at 10am - 12pm

Preston Park

College Road
Wembley
HA9 8RJ

Tuesday 16th December 2025 at 10am-12pm

Tuesday 14th April 2026 at 10am-12pm

Tuesday 23rd June 2026 at 10am-12pm

STAR@brent.gov.uk



Brent Parent Carer Forum in Partnership with Brent SENDIASS DROP-IN SESSIONS

From Thursday 9th October 2025 a member of Brent's SENDIASS team will be available on a first come first seen basis at our offices .

Drop in Dates for 25/26

Thursday 9th October 2025 9.30am -12.30pm

Thursday 6th January 2026 9.30am -12.30pm

Thursday 7th April 2026 9.30am -12.30pm

Thursday 7th July 2026 9.30am -12.30pm

ACAVA Studio 10.01

Barham Park, 660 Harrow Road

WEMBLEY

Middlesex

HA0 2HB

SENDIASS stands for Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service.

Each Local Authority must have its own SENDIASS who offers free, impartial and confidential information, advice and support to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their parents and carers. We can also offer advice to professionals who support children and young people with SEN and their families.

[SENDIASS | Brent Council](#)

Brent SENDIASS is not part of the Special Educational Needs 0-25 team at Brent Council.

While you're waiting, join us for a cuppa and let us help you access services

We are the official strategic model of engagement and participation with parent/carers of children and young people with SEND 0-25 living in Brent.

Mobile Carol 07852101492 or Mirela 07575128582

e-mail: admin@brentpcf.org

www.brentpcf.org

BPCF whats App <https://chat.whatsapp.com/FkK5ph5qGXe692WsSgK6Xu>

Follow us on

 Facebook: Brentpcf

 Instagram: Brentparentcarers

Visit Brent's Local Offer for SEND: www.brent.gov.uk/localoffer



FREE CHILDREN'S DENTAL CHECK-UPS

At Clocktower Dental Surgery

CHILDREN'S DENTAL PILOT PROJECT

Aged 0 to 16 who haven't been to the dentist recently (or maybe ever!)



Seen by our friendly
Dental Therapist for
gentle check-ups
and treatments



Every Tuesday



Clocktower Dental Surgery
(Brent area – patients with
NW10 postcodes)



HOW TO BOOK:
Call our reception on
020 8965 3665



Attendance

Congratulations to Class 5S for best class attendance during week beginning 2 March.

If your child is not going to be in school please call the office on 020 8965 5651 or email the school at: admin@stjo.brent.sch.uk before 8.50am on every day of absence.

If you have any medical questions about your child's health, please contact your GP or call NHS on 111.

In addition to making a telephone call by 8.50am on every day of absence, this must be followed up in writing. Parents may complete a Reason For Absence form (available from school office or school website) or you may write a letter / email to confirm the reason for the absence.

When you know in advance that your child will be absent, please inform the school in advance and provide appropriate documentation such as the medical appointment letter.

Please remember that all school policies are in place for a reason with the main purpose being to ensure the safety, well-being and secure development of your child.

If we have any concerns about a child's absence, we may carry out a home visit. We may also contact Brent Education Welfare and Social Services.

Please remember term time leave for family holidays and celebrations are not permitted in line with our Attendance Policy. Unauthorised absences are referred to Brent Education Welfare who have the authority to issue Education Penalty Notices of £160 per child, per parent. This reduces by 50% if paid within 21 days.

Parental Communication

Parents are reminded that it is very helpful for school to be kept informed of any factors that may impact on your child's learning or well-being. This is to ensure that we are working together to support your child and family.

Please make an appointment to see Mrs Studd to discuss any matters that school should be aware of so we can make informed decisions together.

Safer Internet

At St Joseph's, we frequently communicate with our children and parents about online safety to help reduce the risk of children accessing inappropriate websites or becoming engaged in unsuitable communications online.

The school computers and digital equipment have been protected to prevent children and any other persons on site from accessing any inappropriate materials through the school internet provision.

We encourage parents to ensure that their own home equipment has the same protections. Please also check regularly what your child is doing online.

Our website contains a number of links to resources for parents. Please [click here](#) for direct access to the information.



School Uniform

Please ensure that children wear full school uniform at all times. All items should be clearly labelled.

Children should always wear their blazers to school. When the weather is warmer, children will be given permission to take off their blazers during the school day.

Online Safety

Parents frequently receive information from school regarding the safety of children while they are accessing online activities and games. Parents are reminded about the need for vigilance and strict monitoring of children's activity on online devices and social media apps.

At St Joseph's, we embrace the wonders of modern technology and online live learning was a great success during the most recent national lockdown. However, there are risks when children use their own devices outside of school.

Please be aware that it can take just a few minutes for a stranger to gain a child's trust online and this can often be achieved by the stranger pretending to be a child themselves so they can commit an offence against a child.

Children that know each other can also become involved in inappropriate conduct through online chat and social media. Previously, the school has become aware of a number of WhatsApp groups in which children have been extremely unkind and made hurtful comments. This then becomes an issue in the school community as the feelings caused by online activity in the home are still present when the children see each other in class.

Another important factor that parents must bear in mind is that children aged 10 years old or over are considered in law to be at the age of criminal responsibility. Children may therefore be part of a police investigation if they are involved in any malicious communications or accessing illegal content.

If you are unsure how to protect your child from the potential dangers of online activity, please [click here](#) to access further information.

Expressing Ourselves Safely Online

Many of us are using devices (tablets, laptops, games consoles, phones) to keep in touch with friends and family across the world.

Children enjoy using technology to share their passions and interests but this should be with parental supervision so they are expressing themselves safely and appropriately.

Please support your child in being safe with online interactions, and how this should be appropriate and only with people they really do know and trust.

Encourage your child to let you know immediately if they see or hear anything on their devices that worries them.

Please also be mindful of the amount of time your child spends on their devices, particularly as they are online for home learning.

At National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they ever be in need. This guide focuses on one issue of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, facts and tips for adults.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Online Safety Tips for Children

Wow, it's September already! The month when autumn officially starts and ... oh yeah, the beginning of a new school year. Every cloud has a silver lining though! Another term means new friends to make, different stuff to learn, fresh online trends to jump on and exciting new games to play on your phone, computer or console. We've compiled a list of our top tips to ensure that - whether you're going online to chat, research things or just have fun - you can do it safely.

- Be cautious with your profile**
Be careful not to give out too much info on your social media or gaming profiles. Details like your full name, address or school's name could all help strangers to actually find you offline. A trusted adult can help you make your profiles private - so only your family and actual friends can contact you.
- Lock your devices**
Taking your phone or tablet to school? Turn password protection on. It keeps your private info safe and stops anyone accessing your device without permission. Passwords should be memorable to you - but difficult for anyone else to guess. Get a trusted adult to write it down in case you forget it!
- Be smart with screen time**
Too much screen time, especially just before bed, can affect your quality of sleep. Losing sleep, or not sleeping well enough, messes with your concentration and energy levels. Try muting notifications so you don't get pinged late at night; you'll feel fresher and more focused the next day.
- Know how to deal with bullies**
Sadly there are people online who enjoy picking on other users. If you ever feel like you're being bullied online - by anyone, not just someone from school - talk to a trusted adult about it. Together, you can discuss possible steps, such as blocking or reporting the person who's targeting you.
- Manage online relationships wisely**
Most people in a relationship chat to their partner online. Just be mindful that once you send a pic or message (even if it's private), you no longer control who else might see it. Messaging someone you've never actually met - and who might not be who they say - is definitely best avoided.
- React well to inappropriate content**
When you're researching something online, there's always a chance of finding content that makes you feel uncomfortable or upset. If this happens, you can report it as inappropriate and (hopefully) get it taken down. Tell a trusted adult what happened; they'll help you decide what to do next.
- Report offensive in-game chat**
If you game online with your mates, you'll know things can get competitive and heated on the in-game chat. Playing against people you don't know (especially if they're older) raises the risk of offensive comments and even threats. Our advice? Find out how to block or mute those bad losers.
- Learn to spot fake news**
If you're looking into a topic for homework or a project, be careful not to get taken in by fake news: content that's deliberately created to mislead people. Check the story with credible sources, like the BBC or Sky News. Trust your instincts, too - if it seems too unbelievable to be true, it's probably fake.
- Keep it 'real' with online friends**
Everyone enjoys adding friends and followers on social media. It's important, though, that the people you interact with online really are your friends. If they're just random people you've connected with to increase your contacts, you don't know if they could be trolls or bullies (or worse).

NOS National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

www.nationalonlinesafety.com [@nationalonlinesafety](https://twitter.com/nationalonlinesafety) [/NationalOnlineSafety](https://facebook.com/nationalonlinesafety) [@nationalonlinesafety](https://instagram.com/nationalonlinesafety)

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SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF WILLESDEN



IN THE MARIAN HALL

(ENTRANCE FROM THE REAR OF THE CHURCH
BUILDING... FOLLOW THE PATH ON THE RIGHT-HAND
SIDE OF THE CHURCH, BEAR LEFT AT THE END TO THE
HALL DOORS)

11.30AM – 2.30PM

ON THURSDAYS

HOW TO SUPPORT *YOUR CHILD'S* MENTAL HEALTH

 @BELIEVEPHQ

www.BelievePerform.com



LOVE

Be there for your child and show care and love



EXERCISE

Encourage play, exercise and sport



BEHAVIOUR

Keep an eye out for any changes in behaviour



SUPPORT

Regularly support, encourage and praise your child



REST TIME

Help your child to manage stress by building in some rest time



BE PROUD

Tell your child that you are proud of them



PATIENCE

Be patient. Don't pressure your child



HELP

Don't be afraid to seek help from professionals



FEELING

Get to know how your child is feeling



EDUCATE

Educate yourself about mental health problems



PROBLEM SOLVING

Help your child to effectively problem solve



LISTEN

Make sure you take time to listen to what your child has to say



COPING

Help your child to learn some simple coping skills such as relaxation



SYMPTOMS

Be aware of signs and symptoms



CONVERSATION

Encourage your child to engage in conversation



ENVIRONMENT

Provide a positive environment for your child where they can thrive



Know where to get the right help



There are lots of NHS services that can help you. Knowing where to go, and when, can help you get the right care when you need it.

Pharmacy



Local pharmacists are **qualified healthcare professionals**. They can help you with minor health concerns and illnesses including coughs, colds, upset stomachs and skin/eye infections. They can also give some vaccinations and help with medications.

They can be found on most high streets and are a quick and convenient way to get medical advice. They will see you face to face and provide confidential help on the same day, with **no appointment needed**.

GP/doctor services

local GP practice



Your local GP practice can help with a wide range of general health problems, injuries and illnesses that are not life threatening.

Who you see at your appointment depends on the help you need. There are lots of different people who can help including a doctor, nurse, pharmacists, physiotherapist and many other trained health professionals.

They might see you over the phone, online or in-person.

You will need to be registered before you can book an appointment. To register with a GP practice you do not need proof of address, immigration status, ID or an NHS number. Find a GP practice near you at: www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp

GP help

evenings and weekends

Call your GP practice as normal. The practice answer phone will provide details of where you can get local out of hours appointments. You can also use the **online consultation form** on the practice website if your need is not urgent.

NHS 111



NHS 111 helps people get the right advice and treatment when they urgently need it. 111 can direct you to the best place to get help if you cannot contact your GP during the day, or when your GP is closed.

Doctors, nurses, paramedics and other fully-trained advisors are available 24/7, and can get you the help you need by:

- finding out what local service can help you;
- connecting you to a nurse, emergency dentist, pharmacist or GP
- getting you an appointment if you need one
- telling you how to get any medicine you may need or give self-care advice.

You can contact NHS 111 all day, every day. Visit 111.nhs.uk or call 111.

Know where to get the right help - Continued...



Mental health services



The NHS provides a range of talking therapies for people who feel anxious, worried, down, or depressed. If you need help you can **refer yourself**, you don't need to go to your GP first. To refer your-self and find more information visit: www.nhs.uk/2us.org

Mental health services for people in crisis:

If you need help for a mental health crisis or emergency, you can get immediate help on our freephone lines from trained mental health advisers and clinicians **all day every day**:

Ealing, Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham	0800 328 4444
Brent, Harrow, Hillingdon, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster	0800 0234 650

If you, or someone you know, are experiencing a life-threatening medical emergency you should call 999 or attend an A&E immediately.

For adults:

- signs of a heart attack - chest pain, pressure, heaviness, tightness or squeezing across the chest
- signs of a stroke - face drooping on one side, cannot hold both arms up, difficulty speaking
- sudden confusion (delirium) - cannot be sure of own name or age
- suicide attempt - by taking something or self-harming
- severe difficulty breathing - not being able to get words out, choking or gasping
- choking on liquids or solids
- heavy bleeding - spraying, pouring or enough to make a puddle
- severe injuries - after a serious accident or assault
- seizure (fit) - shaking or jerking because of a fit, or unconscious (cannot be woken up)
- sudden, rapid swelling of the lips, mouth, throat or tongue.

For children:

- seizure (fit) - shaking or jerking because of a fit, or unconscious (cannot be woken up)
- choking on liquids or solids
- difficulty breathing - making grunting noises or sucking their stomach in under their ribcage
- unable to stay awake - cannot keep their eyes open for more than a few seconds
- blue, grey, pale or blotchy skin, tongue or lips - on brown or black skin, grey or blue palms or soles of the feet
- limp and floppy - their head falls to the side, backwards or forwards
- heavy bleeding - spraying, pouring or enough to make a puddle
- severe injuries - after a serious accident or assault
- signs of a stroke - face drooping on one side, cannot hold both arms up, difficulty speaking
- sudden rapid swelling of the lips, mouth, throat or tongue
- sudden confusion - agitation, odd behaviour or non-stop crying.

999

or A&E



Publish date: 06/02/19

What parents need to know about AGE RATINGS

bbfc

If you have children, it is understandable to have concerns about the films and TV shows they watch, as well as the games they play. In this guide, we take a look at the two official ways you can assess if a particular title is suitable for your child. Both the BBFC and PEGI have search facilities on their websites that can be used to look up individual titles so you can check their ratings.

PEGI

RATINGS FOR FILMS, TV & MUSIC VIDEOS

Since 1912, the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification) has informed UK residents of the age suitability of films, TV and music videos - providing parents with the information needed to assess whether or not it is appropriate for their child's age. This applies to cinema releases, DVDs and streaming video services such as Netflix.

WHAT ARE THE BBFC RATINGS?

BBFC ratings are broken down into seven age categories:



WHAT ELSE CAN BBFC REVEAL?

Accompanied with the age suitability rating, BBFC also provide an additional warning regarding the content and what to expect, such as swearing, sexual content, violence and anything you may consider to be inappropriate for your child. In addition to this, the content is also rated in three levels: frequent, mild or strong.

LIMITATIONS OF BBFC RATINGS

It's important to note that there is no obligation on streaming video services to use or display BBFC ratings. Due to this, we advise that you check the rating online before your child streams the content. It may also be a good idea to watch the content first yourself or discuss it with other parents to help you decide whether or not it is suitable for your child.

Source: www.bbfc.co.uk

RATINGS FOR GAMES

PEGI (Pan European Game Information) is a content rating system that ensures all video games are labelled with a minimum age recommendation. These age recommendations are based on the types of content featured within a game. With each game, PEGI also provide a content descriptor that indicates the potential issues and concerns, including sex, violence, bad language and drugs.

WHAT ARE THE PEGI RATINGS?

PEGI ratings are split into age restriction and content descriptors. Additional 'content descriptors' help parents and children to understand the type of content featured within a particular game, including sex, fear, bad language, discrimination, gambling, drugs, violence, and in-game purchases. In combination, the two different ratings can provide a good level of information to help make informed decisions regarding the suitability for your child.

PEGI age ratings are broken down into five categories:



PEGI content descriptors are broken down into eight categories:



LIMITATIONS OF PEGI RATINGS

It's possible for young people to buy games online without a required proof of age, opening them up to age-inappropriate content without you knowing. We advise that you regularly monitor your child's gaming activities and maintain a honest and healthy dialogue with them about the online world.

PARENTAL CONTROLS

It is a good idea to put in place parental controls for all online accounts which your child may use to purchase or download online games e.g. The App Store, Google Play Store, PlayStation Store and Microsoft Xbox Store etc.

Source: www.pegi.info

www.nationalonlinesafety.com

Twitter - @natonlinesafety

Facebook - /NationalOnlineSafety

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Part of our Online Mental Health & Wellbeing Series



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www.nationalonlinesafety.com

What you need to know about...

AGE RATINGS



What are they?

'Age Ratings'

A game's age rating can be used by adults to make an informed choice as to whether or not a game is suitable for their child. The PEGI (Pan European Game Information) system rates games and, instead of indicating the level of ability required to physically play a game, it indicates the suitability of content for that age group. 3, 7, 12, 16 and 18 are the labels that can be awarded to games and a variety of content descriptors such as violence, bad language and fear are used to further clarify why the label was assigned.

16 & UP ONLY



Know the Risks

18+

Inappropriate content

The biggest and most obvious risk of not following the age rating system is that children may view or hear age-inappropriate content. Many games now include scenes of a violent or graphic nature which could be upsetting or considered too intense for younger players.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure has a large role to play in age ratings being overlooked. Children don't want to be the ones left behind and can put their parents under pressure to allow them to play a game beyond the recommended suitability, especially when all of their friends are playing it already.

Level of 'Kudos'

Playing a game with a label that is higher than their age can be viewed by some children as a challenge and to gain a good reputation amongst friends. Kudos is attributed to the child playing the age inappropriate game resulting in more children wanting to follow suit.

Free Platforms

In order for a game to be released on popular platforms, such as Playstation and Xbox, game developers must pay for a PEGI rating. However, smaller development teams are sometimes reluctant to pay these fees and games are often released on other platforms, such as Steam, without any age restrictions.

Spot the Signs

Being vague

Be aware of children being vague around the content of what they want to play. If they are unwilling to supply you with information about what the game is about, this can be an indicator that you wouldn't allow them to purchase it if you knew.

Unofficial sites

There are plenty of indie games that can be bought using online stores that don't necessarily have age restrictions. If you notice your child using sites such as GOG or itch.io rather than official channels such as the Google Play Store, they might be accessing games that aren't officially rated but still aren't age appropriate.

Unfamiliar terminology

Your child might start using phrases or terminology that is new to them or mimicking actions that they have learnt from a game without realising their inappropriateness.

Wanting to be secluded

Be aware if suddenly your child wants to move the device that they play their games on into a more secluded area of the house away from adults. It is a good idea for your child to play online games in shared areas where you can see the screen.

Be aware of spending

Setting up accounts with online stores require bank account details. Keeping an eye on your bank balance means that you will be able to tell if there has been a new purchase and can provide you with an opportunity to ask about what new game they've purchased.

Safety Tips

Do your research

If you've noticed a new game that your child has downloaded then use quality resources to make sure that your knowledge is up to date. Online websites, such as National Online Safety, can provide you with the information you need.

Review parental controls

Review your parental controls on the stores where you buy games from. Most sites allow parents to set passwords to block games with certain age restrictions from being downloaded.

Encourage open dialogue

Encourage open dialogue with your child. You don't want to be in position where they won't talk to you if something has made them feel uncomfortable in a game because they are worried they will get in trouble for playing the game in the first place.

Discuss ratings

Talk to your child about why the game has been awarded a certain label. Debate the positives and negatives of playing a game and decide on some ground rules together.

Our Expert

Heather Cardwell



Heather Cardwell is a practising Online Safety Lead and senior school leader who is passionate about safeguarding online and educating children around online risks. She has over 10+ years as a Computing Lead and has successfully developed and implemented a whole school approach to online safety in schools, delivering online safety training to both school staff and parents and helping to roll-out a bespoke online safety policy across her local network of education settings.

Top Tips for SETTING BOUNDARIES AROUND GAMING

If your child loves video games, then you'll probably be aware that how long they spend gaming – and what they're actually playing – can occasionally become a source of concern or conflict. The UK's trade body for interactive entertainment, Ukie, has recently launched a campaign to promote safer and more responsible gaming among young people – with parents and carers helping by setting sensible and fair boundaries. Our guide has tips on key areas where you could agree some healthy ground rules for your child's gaming activity.

PROMOTE SAFER GAME CHOICES

Deciding which online games are OK – and which should be avoided – is tricky. Some titles allow children to cooperate or compete with strangers, which creates potential risks. Watching your child play online for a while could provide more insight into a particular game, while the parental controls on most consoles allow you to limit who can chat to your child or send them friend requests. Remind your child of the hazards around strangers online when you discuss this boundary with them.

ENCOURAGE REGULAR BREAKS

Help your child understand the need to take regular breaks, playing in shorter bursts rather than marathon sessions. Bear in mind that some games (such as role-playing games) require time investment from the player, while others (online team games, for example) can't be stopped or paused at a moment's notice. A quick break every hour or so is good practice, and you could suggest some things to do in these breaks, such as having a drink of water or getting some fresh air.

AGREE SPENDING LIMITS

There's no doubt that gaming can be expensive, and younger players often don't realise how much paying for digital items and subscriptions can add up to. Many young gamers love to buy new skins or upgrades for their character, so you could settle on a fixed amount that your child is allowed to spend on in-game items each week or month. This sort of boundary will not only help your child to manage their expectations but will also make you more aware of the price of these items.

DISCUSS AGE RATINGS

Children often ignore the age ratings on games – or are unaware they even exist. If you're happy with your child playing a particular game even though it's rated above their age, then establish that as a boundary: emphasise that you've made an exception, and talk about what age ratings mean and why they're important. You could add context to this boundary by browsing games' boxes together while shopping, discussing why some games might have earned certain age ratings.



FACTOR IN FRIENDS

If your child is a keen video gamer, the chances are that they'll have other gamers among their social circle, too. When friends visit, do they instantly dash to their console or computer? You could put boundaries in place before their guests arrive by agreeing on a length of gaming time. Bear in mind, though, that they may try to extend this once they're together. Try coming up with activities or challenges for them during screen breaks – if they join in, they earn a little extra time on their game.

ENJOY GAMING TOGETHER

Setting time aside to play video games together can be an enjoyable bonding exercise. Undoubtedly, some young gamers may be less enthusiastic about a parent or carer joining in, but it can be a productive way of encouraging them to share their hobby with you. Setting goals or tasks might be useful: if they love Minecraft, choose something to build together; if Fortnite's their favourite, ask to try out some of the fun game modes, like Prop Hunt, which don't require high skill levels.

TALK ABOUT EMOTIONS

Help your child to monitor their emotions as they play. Discuss what is (and isn't) an acceptable level of competitiveness to show while gaming. Are they allowed to trash talk other players, for example? Can they notice when they get angry if they lose? Do they think these emotions are healthy? Some games can provoke anger, but others can bring joy, humour and the thrill of overcoming a challenge. Try to steer your child towards games that tend to produce these more positive feelings.

BE PREPARED FOR TROLLS

A frequent problem when gaming online is other players who are deliberately troublesome. Make sure your child knows how to report and block someone who makes their experience a negative one. Between you, decide if or how they should deal with these online trolls. Talk about where your child's boundaries are in terms of what they think is acceptable: what behaviour by other users is merely frustrating, and what crosses the line to become upsetting or abusive.

Meet Our Expert

Daniel Upscombe is a writer specialising in technology, video gaming, virtual reality and Web3. He has also written 16 guidebooks for children, covering games such as Fortnite, Apex Legends, Valorant, Roblox and Minecraft. With work published by the likes of PC Gamer, Kotaku, Pocket Gamer and VG247, he has reviewed more than 50 games and products over the past year.



Source: <https://hipol.app/about/privacy.html>

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SOCIAL MEDIA & MENTAL HEALTH

An estimated one-third of children have a social media account, so it's important that trusted adults know what content young people are consuming, what they're posting and the interactions they're having. On social media, it can be easy to go down 'rabbit holes' that aren't beneficial to our wellbeing. As platforms grapple with managing such 'legal but harmful' content, lives are being impacted – sometimes to tragic effect. We might be daunted by the scale of the tech giants and their content which so enthralls young people, but we can still help children to be aware of their mental wellness: recognising when something isn't OK... and knowing what to do about content that upsets them.

1. UNDERSTAND THE ALGORITHM

Algorithms rank content by user interest: someone who regularly interacts with sports news, say, will see the latest results at the top of their feed. Likewise, if a user browses content that can cause harm, that's what will be recommended to them in future. Someone who's had a bad day and looks for posts which reflect their mood will find similar content being suggested to them more and more.

2. AVOID THE MAIN FEEDS

Avoiding the default feeds on social media platforms limits the amount of recommended content that's shown. Users can opt to only scroll through the accounts they follow, use restricted modes, or highlight posts that they don't want to see more of. Explore the platform safety settings to see how you can take control of what your child's phone shows them when they open the app.

3. DISCUSS WHAT THEY'VE SEEN

Chatting about what your child's seen online keeps you aware of the content they're interacting with. Don't assume that platforms are screening out inappropriate material, or even that your child would recognise content as being harmful. Discuss who they follow, what posts they like and what comes up in their feeds: if alarm bells ring, it could be time for a more in-depth talk or to seek support.

4. LEARN HOW TO HIDE CONTENT

If your child stumbles across unsuitable content on social media, there's the option to hide that post as well as indicating you'd prefer any similar material not to be suggested in future. On some platforms, you might also be able to block posts that contain specific words, which is an excellent way to start taking control of what your child sees online.

5. SET DAILY LIMITS

Phones and most apps can tell you how much they're being used. Spending too long online can mean a child misses out on other activities that are important to all-round wellbeing. You could set some family rules – for everyone to follow – around device use, such as screen time limits and tech-free spaces: involving your child in creating this agreement makes them more likely to stick to it.

6. MONITOR THEIR ACTIVITY

Keeping a discreet eye on how your child is using social media can help ensure they're not entering potentially dangerous situations. As they grow up, of course, children need space to exercise their independence – but you can still occasionally ask to see what they're looking at. Be transparent about your own social media use and try not to sound judgemental about your child's.

7. TURN OFF PUSH NOTIFICATIONS

Even for adults, it's tempting to check an email or message as soon as the alert sound pings. Push notifications encourage people to open their apps and spend time on their device, so turning them off will help your child to practise mindful use of tech. Most of us have other things that we need to focus on as a priority – and those notifications will still be there later, when we have more time.

8. USE DEVICES TOGETHER

Giving children internet-enabled devices and complete freedom to explore platforms on their own can result in exposure to hugely damaging content. You could consider making a particular area at home a designated space to use phones, tablets and so on – making it much easier to monitor what content your child is viewing and (if necessary) steer them away from any potentially harmful paths.

9. ENCOURAGE OTHER ACTIVITIES

Mental health professionals often highlight the importance of exercise, quality time with loved ones, a balanced diet and restful sleep for our mental wellbeing. Spending hours on social media can cause us to sacrifice other activities that our brains need to feel well – so encouraging your child to put down their phone and enjoy something that doesn't involve a screen can be immensely beneficial.

10. TALK ABOUT PEER PRESSURE

Most platforms default children's accounts to private, so only people they've accepted as friends can see their posts. This reduces the risk of bullying or unkind comments, but – just like offline life – the digital world can still make children feel as if they need to act or look a certain way to fit in. Talk to your child about peer pressure, and listen to any concerns so you can provide the support they need.

Meet Our Expert

Shazia Sarwar-Azim is executive headteacher at a specialist primary school and, as an emotional therapy coach, works with school leaders to focus on the SEND, mental health and wellbeing agenda. A passionate advocate for vulnerable learners, Shazia is a Fellow of the Chartered College of Teaching and the author of *The Rainbow Within*, a book which supports children with SEMH needs.



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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

WHATSAPP

AGE RESTRICTION

16+

In UK and Europe;
rest of the world 13+

...MSG ME...

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

With more than two billion active users exchanging texts, photos, videos and documents, as well as making voice and video calls, WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service. Its end-to-end encryption only allows messages to be viewed by the sender and any recipients: not even WhatsApp itself can read them. This privacy issue has been in the spotlight recently, as the UK's Online Safety Bill proposes to end such encryption on private messaging; WhatsApp is unwilling to do so and has reportedly considered withdrawing its service in the UK should this legislation go ahead.

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it a lucrative hunting ground for scammers. Recent examples include posing as the target's child, requesting a money transfer because of a spurious 'emergency'. Plus a scam where fraudsters trigger a verification message by attempting to log in to your account, then (posing as WhatsApp) call or text to ask you to repeat the code back to them, giving them access.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

To start a chat, someone only needs the mobile number of the WhatsApp user that they want to message. If your child has ever given their number out to someone they don't know, that person could then contact them via WhatsApp. It's also possible that your child might be added to a group chat (by one of their friends, for example) containing other people that they don't know.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's connectivity and ease of use allows news to be shared rapidly – whether it's true or not. To combat the spread of misinformation, messages forwarded more than five times on the app now display a 'Forwarded many times' label and a double arrow icon. This makes users aware that the message they've just received is far from an original – and might not be entirely factual, either.

ONLINE

'VIEW ONCE' CONTENT

The facility to send images or messages that can only be viewed once has led to some WhatsApp users sharing inappropriate images or abusive texts, knowing that the recipient can't re-open them later to use as evidence of misconduct. People used to be able to screenshot this 'disappearing' content – but a recently added WhatsApp feature now blocks this, citing increased privacy.

CHAT LOCK

Another new option allows users to store certain messages or chats in a separate 'locked chats' folder, saved behind a passcode, fingerprint or face ID authentication. The risk here is that this function creates the potential for young people to hide conversations and content that they suspect their parents wouldn't approve of (such as age-inappropriate material).

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, which can be helpful for friends meeting up or parents checking that their child's safely on the way home, for example. However, anyone in your child's contacts list or in a mutual group chat can also track their location – potentially letting strangers identify a child's home address or journeys that they make regularly.

Advice for Parents & Carers ...TYPING...

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage your child to treat unexpected messages with caution: get them to consider, for example, whether the message sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change your child's WhatsApp settings (go to 'Privacy', then 'Groups') to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval: you can give permission to 'My Contacts' or 'My Contacts Except...'. Additionally, if your child needs to use 'live location', emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need – and then turn it off.

THINKING BEFORE SHARING

Help your child to understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy – and all too common – for content to then be shared more widely (even publicly on social media). Encourage your child to consider how an ill-judged message might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Some parents like to check in with their child about how they're using WhatsApp, explaining that it will help to keep them safe. If you spot a 'Locked Chats' folder, you might want to talk about the sort of chats that are in there, who they're with and why your child wants to keep them hidden. Also, if your child has sent any 'view once' content, you could discuss their reasons for using this feature.

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.



...HEY OSCAR...



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Source: <https://blog.whatsapp.com/an-open-letter> | <https://faq.whatsapp.com/10770/8839582332> | https://faq.whatsapp.com/36005896189245/shelprf-hc_inov
<https://www.whatsapp.com/security> | <https://blog.whatsapp.com/chat-lock-making-your-most-intimate-conversations-even-more-private>
<https://www.aura.com/learn/whatsapp-scams>

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about LIVE STREAMING

Live streaming involves broadcasting and watching videos online in real time, often on social media or via platforms like YouTube and Twitch. Viewers can interact through comments, chats and reactions during the broadcast: such instant engagement makes this an exciting way to share experiences, learn from others and build digital communities. Despite the many positives, live streaming also creates a potential platform for unsuitable content and poses some risks to children: it's essential to keep privacy and safety in mind and comply with each site or app's age restrictions.

AGE RESTRICTION
13+
16+ 18+
Age varies by platform

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

LACK OF AGE VERIFICATION

Despite their age restrictions, some platforms don't require proof of age at sign up – meaning that anyone can register for an account (and potentially pretend to be older or younger than they actually are). In many cases, this means that young live streamers can never be totally certain exactly who they are broadcasting to and who is engaging with their live stream.

DISCLOSING PERSONAL INFO

A characteristic of live streaming is the ability for videos to be instantly shared worldwide. Without the correct privacy settings enabled, a child could inadvertently reveal personal information or their location, making them vulnerable to online predators or identity theft. It's wise to regularly check the privacy settings (and what data is being shared) on any apps your child has signed up for.

ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN

As the video streams are live, children might encounter (or inadvertently share) inappropriate content. Most live-streaming apps have rules to prevent this and monitor their services, also providing report buttons where content can be flagged for review. It may not be dealt with instantly, however, meaning that your child could be further exposed to harmful content during a live stream.

UNAUTHORISED RECORDINGS

Each live streaming platform stores completed videos for different periods (Twitch saves broadcasts for 60 days, for example, while Facebook and YouTube remove them only at the creator's request). Deleting a video, though, doesn't always stop it from being shared: in some cases, streams have been illegally recorded (or screenshots taken) by certain viewers and redistributed on other sites.

ROGUE CONTENT CREATORS

Children can also watch other people's live streams, which could potentially contain anything at any time (such as nudity, drug use or profanity). Most apps claim to monitor live streams and will stop any that don't adhere to their guidelines – but with millions of streams per day, it's complicated to regulate them all, so children could be exposed to inappropriate content without parents knowing.

DANGER OF GROOMING

There are increasing reports of children being coerced into performing "suggestive acts" by strangers on some live-streaming apps. Due to the lack of verification required for certain apps, almost anyone can sign up to these services (including anonymously or under a fake identity). It's vital, therefore, to ensure the correct safety measures are in place before your child begins live streaming.

Advice for Parents & Carers

PUT PRIVACY FIRST

Through the streaming app's settings, switch your child's account to 'private', so only their friends and followers can see their broadcasts. You could also turn off the live chat, shielding your child from any upsetting comments – although viewers' feedback is often seen as an integral part of the fun. Identify any nearby items (such as school uniforms or visible landmarks) that could give away your child's location.

MANAGE MULTISTREAMING

Some apps and sites let users stream their content through multiple social media platforms at once. A broadcast on SteamYard, for example, can be shared on YouTube, Twitch, X and Facebook if the accounts are linked. The privacy settings can differ on each of these, so we'd suggest only streaming via one platform at a time to maintain greater control over who's watching your child's videos.

GET INVOLVED YOURSELF

Research suggests a significant number of streams show a child on their own, often in a supposed safe space like their bedroom. If your child wants to live stream, ask if you could be present because you're interested in how it works. You could even set up your own account to gain a more detailed knowledge of what your child talks about in their live streams – and who they're broadcasting to.

TALK ABOUT LIVE STREAMING

Try to start with positives before discussing potential risks. You could ask which live streaming apps your child likes and how they use them. Do they just watch streams or create their own? Explain why it's unwise to reveal personal information while streaming (even to friends). If you feel your child's too young for live streams, explain your reasoning to them and perhaps agree to review this decision in the future.

CONSIDER THEIR ONLINE REPUTATION

As the broadcasts are live, it often causes the misconception among young people that whatever happens in their video simply 'vanishes' once the stream ends. However, videos can stay online indefinitely or be recorded by other users. It's important that your child understands what they do and say in a live stream could potentially damage their online reputation and, quite possibly, be seen by prospective future employers, colleges or universities.

Meet Our Expert

Rhodri Smith is Head of Digital Learning at Thomas's Kensington, London. Recognised in the EdTech 50 UK Awards Yearbook 2022/23 for his efforts in the digital transformation at Cubitt Town Primary School and Tower Hamlets, he is also a Google for Education Certified Trainer and guest lecturer at University College London on the integration of technology across the curriculum.



National Online Safety

#WakeUpWednesday

Source: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/media/2339a2/distribution-of-captures-of-live-streamed-child-sexual-abuse-final.pdf>

4 Ways to Wellbeing

It's okay not to be okay, but there are some things you can do to fix that. If you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed try these top tips for positive mental health.



Keep in touch

Communicating and creating meaningful relationships is an essential step to having a healthier state of mind. Keeping lines of communication open can also help reduce stress.



Stay active

Step outside, Stretch, take a walk or do some sort of activity. Staying active also helps reduce stress and increases your physical and mental energy.



Take some time out

Take a break, disconnect from your phone, and relax. Do something you like and take some time to focus on yourself until you are in a better head-space.



Reach out for help

Everyone needs someone to lean on sometimes. You don't have to get through everything alone. Reach out to someone and tell them how you're feeling, they may be able to help you find a solution.

OUT WITH STRANGER DANGER IN WITH CLEVER NEVER GOES



TEACH THE CLEVER OPTION AT HOME

CLEVER NEVER GOES is the new, child-friendly lesson that teaches children how to stay safe from abduction when they are outside (e.g. walking to or from school), or online.

It's been created to help parents/guardians talk to their children about staying safe in a simple way.

Instead of creating a fear of people it teaches them to recognise the danger in a situation, regardless of who's involved.

THE RULE:

If anyone asks you to go - even someone that you know - if it hasn't been agreed, remember: CLEVER NEVER GOES



The **CLEVER NEVER GOES** rule means children shouldn't go anywhere with anyone - even if they know them - if it hasn't been agreed in advance by a parent or guardian.

And please remember, children learn through repetition so make sure you remind them regularly of **CLEVER NEVER GOES** when they're going outside or online.

For more information, ideas and resources to have that clever conversation go to: clevernevergoes.org

WHY CHANGE?

Since it was introduced in the 1970's, the 'stranger danger' message has been fundamentally flawed.

Most strangers will help rather than harm a child, and many people that do pose a risk to children are not strangers.

Furthermore, it demands that all strangers should be treated with suspicion, which breeds fear in our communities. This has led to children spending less time outdoors, fuelling a rise in obesity and mental health problems.

Add to this, children are spending more time online, increasing their risk of being groomed. Now is the time for a new approach that creates safer, happier and healthier children.

Backed by more than 1,000 schools across the UK, **CLEVER NEVER GOES** is more practical than stranger danger and gives children the skills and confidence to safely explore their outdoor and online worlds without fear. And gives parents the reassurance to let them.

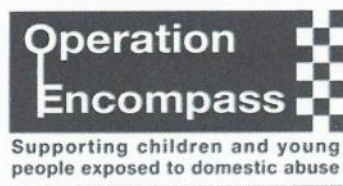
clever never goes



**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

Serving
Hampshire
Isle of Wight
Poole
Southampton

This leaflet has been brought to you by the charity Action Against Abduction (registered no. 1081904) with the support of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire.



Dear Parent/Carer,

The school has been given the opportunity to take part in a project that will run jointly between schools and the Metropolitan Police Service. This project is known as Operation Encompass.

Operation Encompass is the notification to schools that a child (under 18) has been exposed to, or involved in, any domestic incident. This will ordinarily be done by the start of the next school day.

Operation Encompass will ensure that a specially trained member of the school staff, known as a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), is informed. The DSL can then use the information that has been shared, in confidence, to ensure the wellbeing of the child.

The school may be able to make provisions or adjustments to assist the child and their family.

We are keen to offer the best support possible to all our pupils and we believe this will be extremely beneficial for all those involved.

Signed

Head Teacher

