ST. ANNE'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

"Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly With Your God"

Cyber Safe

ONLINE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025

WELCOME TO THE SECOND EDITION OF CYBERSAFE!

Dear Students, Families, and Colleagues,

In a digital world that is constantly evolving, staying informed is one of the most effective ways to stay safe. This month's edition focuses on three key areas where online risks and opportunities are rapidly growing: **In-Game Chat**, **WhatsApp Channels** and **Fake News**.

We will explore **In-Game Chat**, a feature now built into many popular online games. While it can encourage teamwork, creativity, and social connection, it also opens the door to unsafe behaviour, inappropriate conversations, and contact from strangers. We'll highlight the risks, and practical steps you can take to help keep gaming experiences positive and safe.

Next, we will dive into **WhatsApp Channels**, a new broadcast tool within WhatsApp that allows individuals and organisations to send updates to large audiences. With new features come new considerations: who can reach you, what information they can see, and how messages within channels might influence the spread of information. We will break down how channels work and what privacy settings and controls you should be aware of.

Lastly, we will look into one of the biggest online challenges today: **Fake News**. Misinformation continues to spread rapidly across social networks, messaging apps, and online communities. We will provide tips on how to recognise misleading content, how to fact-check with confidence, and how to talk to children about questioning what they see online.

This newsletter is packed with practical guidance, useful resources, and up-to-date insights to help you stay informed and protected.

Enjoy!

Mrs Claudia Duarte, Head of Online Safety

Are YOU Worried?

If you have a concern about your daughter or another student's online activity or safety you can reach out to your child's Learning Support Coordinator or contact Kaylea Vevers, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, by emailing dsl@st-annes.enfield.sch.uk

IN-GAME CHAT

In-game chat is a feature in online games that lets players talk to each other while they play. Players can use in-game chat to work together, make friends or just have fun. It can be used to:

- Send text messages.
- Speak using voice chat.
- Share emojis or reactions.

What are the potential risks of in-game chat?
- Chatting with people they don't know.
- Inappropriate or unmoderated chat.
- Requests to chat in private.
- Offering gifts or trades.

How to help protect your child:
- Get to know the online games your child plays.
- Use family controls. Use family controls and in-game settings to manage, limit or turn off in-game chat.
- Keep devices in a shared space for younger children.
- Support your children to report inappropriate chat. Support your children to tell you when a chat makes them feel worried or uncomfortable and help them report directly to the game or console.

Find out more here:
www.ceopeducation.co.uk/parents/articles/in-game-chat/
www.internetmatters.org/resources/gaming-guide-for-teens/
www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/gaming-consoles/

WHATSAPP CHANNELS

WhatsApp has a **minimum age** requirement of **13 years**. If your child uses WhatsApp, it's important to be aware of WhatsApp Channels. These channels let users subscribe to updates from selected sources. Organisations, companies, influencers, and public figures can use them to share information, images and videos with their followers. Unlike WhatsApp groups or regular chats, channels do not allow direct interaction between subscribers and the channel owners. Subscribers can receive messages but cannot reply; the only possible response is an emoji reaction.

What are the potential risks of WhatsApp Channels?
- Children can access channels that offer a wide range of content, some of which may be inappropriate for their age and could include adult material.

- Many channels share links to videos or external websites, directing children to other apps (such as YouTube) or to web pages that open in a browser. Videos and audio clips can also be played directly within the channel, meaning children don't need to leave WhatsApp to view them. As a result, parental control tools cannot reliably block this content.

- Children are able to create their own channels. These channels do not appear in public search results, but a child can share invitation links to let others follow their channel.

- WhatsApp does not provide a way to disable the Channels feature. Channels are also not categorised by age, so parents cannot limit search results to channels appropriate for their child's age group.

How to help protect your child:
- Regular supervision and communication about which contacts your child have on WhatsApp, which groups they have joined, and which channels they follow.

- Use technical restrictions to prevent your child switching from WhatsApp to other apps (such as YouTube or a browser). To do this, you need to prevent access to the YouTube app or browser using a parental control program.

Find out more here:
www.klicksafe.eu/en/news/was-sind-whatsapp-kanaele-und-was-muessen-eltern-beachten
www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/
www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/

FAKE NEWS

There are so many stories and pieces of information online that it can be hard to know what's real and what's fake. Some children might struggle to make sense of what is true. Fake news is not the preferred term as it refers to false information and news online. However, it's more appropriate to use **'misinformation'** and **'disinformation'**.

- **Misinformation** is false information spread by people **who think it is true**.

- **Disinformation** is false information spread by people **who know it is false**.

How does misinformation impact children?
Mis/disinformation is an online harm and can impact children's:

- Mental health
- Physical wellbeing
- Future finances
- Views towards other people

Types of misleading information:
Misleading information comes in many shapes and sizes. Having good media literacy skills can help children assess whether information is factual or is misleading. The following are common types of misleading information:

- **Clickbait** is content meant to encourage people to click on the link, video or image. It is a popular way for websites to gain visits on social media or on video-sharing platforms like YouTube. Often, the content featured in the thumbnail is not actually in the link users' click.

- **Sock Puppet Accounts** are social media users or pages that pretend they are public figures. They can use the public's opinion of this figure to share misleading information. It can cause confusion and lead to harm, depending on the messages shared. Children should report sock puppet accounts on the social media platform.

- **Deepfakes** are videos that feature digitally altered versions of people. Often, these are public figures altered to say or do something they wouldn't actually say or do. Many deepfakes use artificial intelligence to create realistic videos that can trick people into believing they're real.

- **Social Media Spoofing** is one common online scam targeting teens. It involves scammers creating fake social media profiles to pose as an acquaintance, popular celebrity or corporate brand. They then trick users into sending them money. Or, they might gain access to personal information or spread malicious software onto their devices. Cyber criminals may also take control of high profile social media accounts to fool their followers. As a result, they can persuade victims to send money or carry out cyber-attacks.
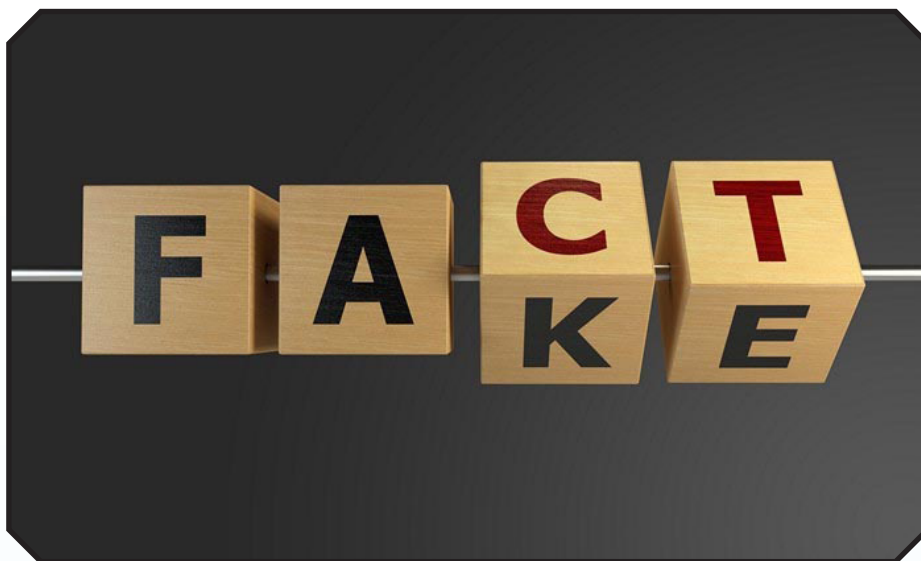
How to help protect your child
Practise media literacy skills with your child by supporting them to:

- Choose trusted sources of information

- Use fact-checking websites to check the reliability of information online, for example:

    fullfact.org/
    www.bbc.co.uk/news/bbcverify
    www.snopes.com/
    www.channel4.com/news/factcheck

Find out more here:
https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/summary-of-types-of-fake-news/
https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/expert-opinion/common-online-scams-targeting-teenagers/

TEST YOURSELF
FAKE OR FUN

Internet Matters have created a quiz for families to learn and test their knowledge on what fake news, disinformation and misinformation are and how to stop them from spreading..

Find out more here:
www.internetmatters.org/issues/fake-news-and-misinformation-advice-hub/find-the-fake/
fact-or-fake-quiz/