



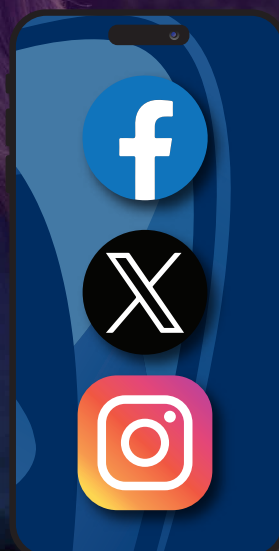
# The Abbey School

"BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE"

## Safeguarding Newsletter 2024/25

Date: 18/07/25

THE HOWARD  
Academy Trust



# ABBEY SCHOOL SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

The school holidays are fast approaching, and we are aware that for some families and students this can feel daunting as the support in school will not be available. The end of year safeguarding newsletter is packed with helpful tips on topical concerns and useful contacts when faced with a concern or in crisis help is available.

## ONLINE SAFETY DURING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

"When we buy our children their first bike, we know we must teach them to ride it. It's the same with technology. Make sure they have the best possible experience using it by teaching them how to use it safely."  
Vicki Shotbolt, Executive Board Member of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety



The NSPCC provide helpful online safety tips see below and follow the link below for more advice how to keep children safe online.

[https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety?gad\\_campaignid=20616872064&gad\\_source=1](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety?gad_campaignid=20616872064&gad_source=1)

## ONLINE TIPS FOR PARENTS/CARERS

**Follow age requirements** - Many popular Apps, sites and games are 13+.

**Speak to phone providers** - Register phone as a child's device. This means additional safety restrictions can be put in place.

**Manage settings** – Set up parental controls, safety and wellbeing settings across all devices and accounts.

**Focus on regular safety conversations** – Check in with regular conversations regarding online use.

**Share youth facing help and support** - Make sure your child knows about services that can help like Childline. You could start by sharing the online safety advice content and the Report Remove tool created by the IWF and Childline.

**Revisit parental controls** – Keep checking these regularly to make sure they are in place.

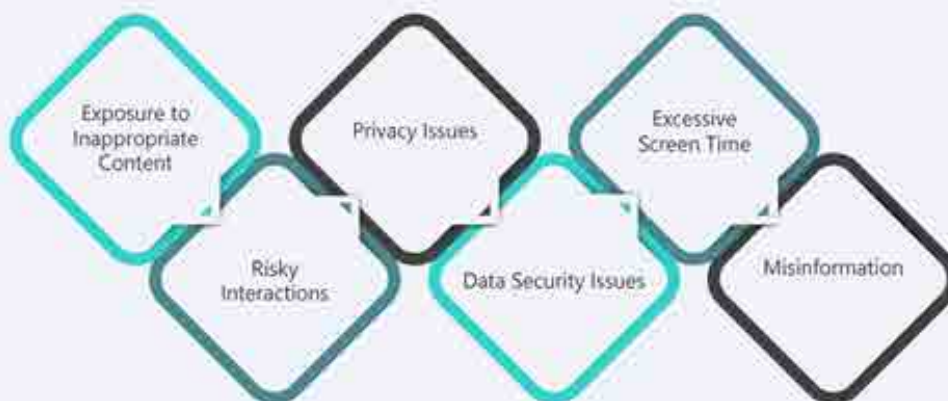
**Healthy habits together** – Healthy habits work best when all the family agrees to following them. This could be agreeing to charge devices away from beds to support sleep and not using devices during mealtimes to help take breaks.



A centre that provides support, tools, and resources for online safety issues. It offers helpline, training and events for professionals, parents, carers, and young people across the UK to make the internet a safer place for young people.



### Character AI's Safety Risks for Children



# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

AI has become a part of our daily live. AI is everywhere, from virtual assistants on our phones to smart home devices. While AI can make our lives easier, it's important to understand how to use it safely. Here are some tips for teens and parents on safely using AI.

**Understand the technology-** AI is a complex technology that uses algorithms and data to make predictions and decisions. E.g. gaining Instagram or YouTube followers by figuring out the algorithm.  
**Be mindful of privacy-** AI relies on data to function, and that data often comes from users. When using an AI-powered device or service, be mindful of the data collected and its use. Read the privacy policy carefully.

**Don't share personal information-** Never share personal information, such as your full name, address, or phone number, with an AI-powered device or service unless you trust it completely.

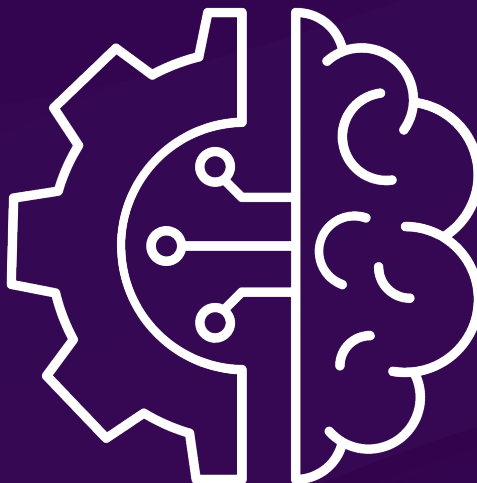
**Use strong passwords-** Just like with any other online account, using strong passwords to protect your data is important.

**Be aware of bias-** AI algorithms can be biased, just like humans. Bias in AI can lead to unfair or inaccurate decisions.

**Don't rely on AI alone-** While AI can be helpful, it's important not to rely on it alone. Always double-check the information and don't make important decisions based solely on AI predictions.

**Keep software up to date-** Updates often include security patches and bug fixes that can protect your data and improve performance.

**Monitor usage-** Parents should monitor their children's usage of AI-powered devices and services to ensure they are using them safely set guidelines for usage, such as limiting screen time and only allowing certain apps and services.





# ONLINE GROOMING - NATIONAL COLLEGE

At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit [www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com) for further guides, hints and tips for adults.



Online Grooming is when someone befriends and builds an emotional relationship with a child and communicates with them through the internet with the intent to commit a sexual offence. This type of victimisation can take place across any platform; from social media and messaging apps to online gaming and live streaming. Often it involves young people being tricked, forced or pressured into doing something they wouldn't normally do (coercion) and often the groomer's goal is to meet the victim in a controlled setting to sexually or physically abuse them. In some cases children may be abducted or have long-lasting psychological damage.



## What parents need to know about

# ONLINE GROOMING



### CHILDREN ARE MOST VULNERABLE

Unsurprisingly children are often most at risk as they are easy to target and unlikely to question the person who is engaging in conversation with them. Groomers will use psychological tricks and methods to try and isolate them from their families and friends and will often choose to target more vulnerable children who may be easier to manipulate. Predators will stalk apps and websites that are popular with young people and will use a 'scattergun' approach to find victims, contacting hundreds online to increase their chances of success.



### LIVE STREAMING CONCERNS

Predators may use live video to target children in real-time using tricks, dares or built-in gifts to manipulate them. Grooming often takes the form of a game where children receive 'likes' or even money for performing sexual acts. Social media channels, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, all have live streaming capabilities, but there are many apps which children can use to live stream, including Omegle, Live.me, BIGO Live, YouNow and many more.



### ANYONE CAN BE A PREDATOR

The internet has made the ability to interact with strangers online easy. Many sites and apps are reliant on individual users entering their own information when signing up. However individuals can remain anonymous if they choose to enter inaccurate information and many online predator cases are due to groomers using impersonation techniques. However, often the greater threat comes from adults who 'hide in plain sight', choosing to befriend young children without hiding their real identity.



### CAN BE DIFFICULT TO DETECT

Unfortunately, most children find the 'grooming' process (before any meeting) an enjoyable one as the predator will compliment, encourage, and flatter them to gain their trust, friendship and curiosity - 'a wolf in sheep's clothing' scenario. This often means children fail to disclose or report what is happening. If the groomer is also previously known to the child, their family and their friends, then this can make detection even harder.



### FROM OPEN TO CLOSED MESSAGING

Online predators may contact their victims using any number of ways including social media, forums, chat rooms, gaming communities or live streaming apps. Sometimes there is little need to develop a 'friendship'/'rapport stage', as the victim has already shared personal information online and is communicating openly with others. Children may also be prepared to add other online users they don't know so well to gain 'online credibility' through increasing their friends list. Predators will often seize this opportunity to slowly build a relationship and then move their conversation with the child to a more secure and private area, such as through direct messaging.

### EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS

Online predators will use emotive language and aim to form close, trusted bonds with their victims through showering them with compliments and making them feel good about themselves. Often victims will refer to them as their 'boyfriends' or 'girlfriends' and it can be difficult to convince some young people that they have been groomed, often leading to lasting psychological effects.

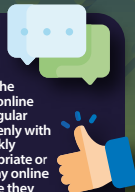


## Safety Tips for Parents & Carers



### IT'S GOOD TO TALK

It's unlikely that you can stop your child using the internet, nor can you constantly monitor their online activities, but you can talk to your child on a regular basis about what they do online. By talking openly with them about online relationships, they can quickly ascertain the kind of behaviour which is appropriate or inappropriate. Ask them whether they have any online friends or if they play online games with people they haven't met. This could then open up conversations about the subject of grooming.



### CHECK PRIVACY SETTINGS

In order to give your child a safer online experience, it is important to check privacy settings or parental controls on the networks, devices, apps, and websites they use. Disable location sharing if you can. If you use location-sharing apps to check where your child is, remember that these could always be used by strangers to follow your child without their knowledge. Ensure that you check options so that location information is never shared with anyone except those they have permission to share with.



### MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA & LIVE-STREAMING USE

It's important to be aware of what your child is sharing on social media and with whom. Create your own profile and become 'friends' with them or follow them so that you can monitor their activity. Similarly, always check on them if they are live streaming and implement privacy controls. Choose a generic screen name and profile picture that hides their identity. You may also feel more comfortable being present each time they live stream.



### STICK TO 'TRUE FRIENDS'

Make it clear to your child that they should not accept friend requests from people they don't know and to verify friend requests with people who they do know. Encourage them to only interact and engage with 'true friends' (i.e. those friends who don't ask personal questions such as close family and friends. Remind them to never agree to chat privately with a stranger or someone they don't really know and to never divulge personal information, such as mobile phone numbers, addresses, passwords or the name of their school.



### DISCUSS HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Talk to your child about what a healthy relationship looks like and how to detect someone who might not be who they claim to be. Explain that groomers will pay your child compliments and engage in conversations about personal information, such as hobbies and relationships. They may admire how well they play an online game or how they look in a photo. Groomers will also try and isolate a child from people close to them, such as parents and friends, in order to make their relationship feel special and unique.

### BE SUPPORTIVE

Show your child that you will support them and make sure they understand that they can come to you with any concerns they may have. They need to know they can talk to you if someone does something they are uncomfortable with, whether that is inappropriate comments, images, requests or sexual comments.



## Meet our expert

Jonathan Taylor is an online safety expert and former Covert Internet Investigator for the Metropolitan Police. He is a specialist in online grooming and exploitation and has worked extensively with both UK and international schools in delivering training and guidance around the latest online dangers, social media apps and platforms.



### LOOK OUT FOR WARNING SIGNS

Child safety experts have identified key grooming patterns and advise parents to look out for:

- Secretive online behaviour.
- Late night internet or smartphone usage.
- Meeting new friends in unusual places.
- Becoming clingy, develop sleeping or eating problems or even bedwetting.
- Lack of interest in extra-curricular activities.
- Having new items, such as clothes or phones, unexplainably.
- Seem withdrawn, anxious, depressed or aggressive.
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends.



# WHY DON'T YOU SEE HOW WELL YOU DO IN THE NSPCC ONLINE QUIZ?

(ANSWERS ARE AT THE END OF THE QUIZ)

## Online safety quiz



1. You've received a friend request from someone you don't know. do you accept them?

- ☐ A) No, you decline the request and block them. If it's made you feel uncomfortable or worried you tell a parent / guardian / teacher.
- ☐ B) Yes, and then send them a message asking who they are.
- ☐ C) You ask your friends to find out if anyone knows who the person is and only accept if someone else knows them.

2. You want to post a video to TikTok, but you were wearing your school uniform in the video. Does it matter?

- ☐ A) No it doesn't matter, everyone knows which school you go to anyway and most of your followers know you in person.
- ☐ B) You suppose it would be better without the uniform but can't be bothered to refilm so post it anyway.
- ☐ C) Yes, it matters because your uniform has the school name on it, which is personal info, and it can give away your location so you shouldn't post the video online.

3. Your friend always 'checks in' to whatever location you are at, tagging you in the post too. Should you ask her to stop tagging you?

- ☐ A) Yes, talk to your friend to ask them not to check in because you don't want to share details of your location. Talk about why it isn't always a good idea to share your location online when you aren't sure who will be able to see it.
- ☐ B) No, just have a competition to see who can tag who quickest next time!
- ☐ C) You'd like to, but you know they will say you are being silly by not wanting them to tag you.

4. You get an email from the app you use all the time asking for your password to fix a problem with your account. What do you do?

- ☐ A) Reply straight away with your password – you don't want to risk losing access.
- ☐ B) Don't click on any links in the email, but go to the app itself and check for any genuine messages. It's probably best to change your password too.
- ☐ C) Reply asking for confirmation that the email is genuine and not a scam before sending your password.

5. In a game chat someone you don't know sends you a link. What do you do?

- ☐ A) Don't click on any links. You can report the message or just delete straight away.
- ☐ B) The name looks familiar, so you click the link to see if it is anything interesting.
- ☐ C) Forward it to your friend to see what they think.

6. Someone you know has sent you a message saying horrible things about another person. What should you do?

- ☐ A) Agree with them, you don't really like the other person anyway.
- ☐ B) Don't reply to the message, but take a screenshot and show it to an adult you trust (it could be a teacher who can act to stop the bullying).
- ☐ C) Ignore it and delete the message, you don't want to get involved.





**7. You find out someone has shared an embarrassing photo of you, what should you do?**

- ☐ A) Just ignore it and hope that it'll be a photo of someone else they find funny tomorrow.
- ☐ B) Message them and call them names to get back at them.
- ☐ C) You know it'll be embarrassing, but it is best to tell an adult you trust (a parent, or teacher) what has happened so they can help.

**8. You've been chatting to another player on an online game for a few weeks and they've suggested meeting up at the weekend. What do you say?**

- ☐ A) This feels a bit weird, so tell an adult you trust (or a Childline counsellor) what they've asked you to do.
- ☐ B) Say yes as long as you can meet in a busy place.
- ☐ C) Take your best mate along with you, you'll be fine if there are two of you.

**9. How do you find out if a new game you want to play is suitable for your age?**

- ☐ A) Look it up on the app store or game developer site and see what age rating it has.
- ☐ B) Ask your mates if they are playing it, if they are you can get it too.
- ☐ C) You just play the games you like, so don't bother checking what the age rating is.

**10. When playing a game a new player joins in with a rude username. They join in the chat and say some horrible things to you. What should you do?**

- ☐ A) Just ignore it, they obviously don't like you and you don't want to make it worse.
- ☐ B) Stop playing the game, you don't want to have to hear the horrible comments.
- ☐ C) Report the player to the game and block them. Talk to your parent / adult.

**11. You use a chat site to talk about a game while you are playing, but one person keeps going off topic and asking things like what you are doing at the weekend and where are you going. Is this weird and should you answer?**

- ☐ A) Just ignore the off topic comments and talk about the game. If they keep doing it report it to a moderator.
- ☐ B) Tell them all about your weekend plans and what you are going to be doing.
- ☐ C) Message them privately and tell them your plans – you don't want the rest of the chat group to know.

**12. You are struggling to pass a level on a game. A friend says that they can pass the level for you if you give them your password to log in. Should you do this?**

- ☐ A) Say thanks but no thanks because you don't share passwords (or other personal info). But ask for some tips about the game instead.
- ☐ B) If it gets you to the next level you'd try anything!
- ☐ C) Say yes, but make them promise to forget your password straight away.

Children can contact Childline any time to get support themselves at: [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)



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**EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR**

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# UNDERAGE DRINKING

Some children and teenagers drink alcohol. But whether this is at home with family, or at a party with friends, it's a parent's responsibility to make sure they're safe and know the risks.

## It's against the law:

for anyone to buy alcohol if they're under 18 years old  
For under 18-year-olds to ask anyone else to buy alcohol for them  
to give a child alcohol if they are under 5 years old.

## It's legal:

for over 18s to buy beer, wine, or cider for 16- and 17-year-olds if they're having a meal together in licensed premises, like a pub.  
for 5- to 17-year-olds to drink alcohol at home or other private premises

## Discuss the Risks

ask them what they'd do in this situation.  
tell them there's a link between alcohol, anti-social behaviour, and sexual activity -  
and how they can keep themselves safe by drinking in moderation.  
make them aware of the risk of drinks being spiked and how to keep themselves and friends safe.

Go online for more advice at Drink Aware and Family Lives.

## If you are worried

Although it's fairly common for teenagers to try alcohol before they are 18 years old, it's not normal for them to:  
get drunk regularly.  
drink in excess while they're alone.  
be dependent on alcohol.

A doctor may be able to refer your child on to treatment services and offer support to you or other family members.

Or you can get help using Drinkline: 0300 123 1110



**The Consequences of Underage Drinking**

Children who drink alcohol are more likely to:

- ✓ Use drugs
- ✓ Get bad grades
- ✓ Suffer injury or death
- ✓ Engage in risky sexual activity
- ✓ Make bad decisions
- ✓ Have health problems

underageddrinking.samhsa.gov

**talk**  
they hear you®



# MENTAL HEALTH

We recognise in school students can struggle to manage their mental health and wellbeing during the summer break we want to signpost young people, parents, and carers to easily accessible support available online.

It is important to have open, honest conversations with your child about their wellbeing. Encourage them to confide in you or another trusted adult if they're feeling worried. Reassure them that help, and support is available, no matter what the situation, and remind them that looking after their mental health is just as important as keeping physically safe.

## Worried About the Summer Holidays

The summer holidays are different for everyone. Your child might be excited about a holiday or having time off from school or could be thinking about how they will cope.

They might be worried about:

- feeling lonely or not going out
- not seeing people who normally give support.
  - coping without a routine
- waiting for exam results or starting a new school

## Self-harm can be a concern

### What is self-harm?

Self-harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations and experiences. Some people have described self-harm as a way to:

- Express something that is hard to put into words
- Turn invisible thoughts or feelings into something visible
  - Change emotional pain into physical pain
- Reduce overwhelming emotional feelings or thoughts
  - Feel more in control
  - Escape traumatic memories
- Have something in life that they can rely on
- Punish themselves for their feelings and experiences
  - Stop feeling numb, disconnected or dissociated
  - Create a reason to physically care for themselves
- Express suicidal feelings and thoughts without taking their own life



**Childline** are there to offer your child support all through the holidays. During the summer holidays, Childline experiences an increase in contacts related to various issues such as Emotional Support and Mental Health. Childline provides emotional support for children and young people. During the summer break, they often receive more contacts related to mental health, body image, and eating problems. If you or someone you know needs support, consider reaching out to Childline.  
Childline | Free counselling service for kids and young people | Childline

**MIND**- Mental Health charity see website for more information on young people's mental health, how to get help for your mental health | Young People's Mental Health below is a link to a short video which guides you on how to look after your mental health [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rgil2\\_hlbmU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rgil2_hlbmU)

**Rethink** is a leading charity provider of mental health services in England. Rethink have created a resource toolkit with the support of a group of young people who have experience of mental health problems. They are a mixture of things to read and think about, and activities which you can download and keep. These resources are not a substitute for professional help – and a key piece of advice throughout is to talk about how you're feeling and ask for help. Click on the link below to access more information.

<https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/TOOLKIT-MENTAL-HEALTH-FOR-YOUNG-PEOPLE-from-Rethink.pdf>

**Kooth** is an online platform to help young people with their mental health and wellbeing. It's a welcoming space to safely explore your feelings. You can anonymously talk to other people your own age and chat to mental health professionals via messaging.

**Qwell** is an online platform that offers free, safe, and confidential mental health and wellbeing support for adults. You can share your challenges, explore resources, and check in with practitioners.

**Shout 24/7** text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. If you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help. Text 85258.

**Sateda**- If you think you or someone you know may be experiencing abuse visit Sateda website You can also visit one of the drop-in centres in Swale and Maidstone, where you can speak face-to-face with someone.

**NSPCC**- National Society prevention of cruelty to children – Visit their website for useful information as a parent/carer Supporting a child who has mental health problems.

- What parents can do about self-harm
- Online safety information for parents
- Advice on talking to children about drugs and alcohol
- Help talking about difficult topics

### **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) providers - Swale**

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme supports families across Kent on behalf of Kent County Council.

Eligible families in Swale can access free holiday clubs offering fun activities and healthy meals for children during school holidays.

Please note bookings must be made via the link provided in your HAF e-voucher.

# WHAT SHOULD I DO IF?

*My child has received inappropriate images and messages on their phone?*

Contact the police immediately, as sharing indecent images, grooming, or coercion is a criminal offence.

*My child is constantly on their phone I have no idea who they are talking too, they are up all night gaming and chatting I am worried and unsure what I can do?*

Talk to them about your concerns, regularly check their online activity, put boundaries in place, and check parental controls are in place, take the phone away from them as the bill payee and a concerned parent you have a duty of care to protect them.

*My child has been missing all day. I left for work early this morning, and their friends haven't seen them either.*

Call the Police report them as missing. It's important to discuss what the plans are for the following day and instruct your child to let you know where they are going, who with and they must let you know if plans are changed.

*My child has taken something harmful I am not sure how much, but they are not able to tell me what they have taken or how much.*

Call 999 ask for ambulance provide as much information as you can, and they will advise if urgent medical treatment is required and what to do. Often young people can try to harm themselves as they don't know how to ask for help. Once medical attention has been given a referral if appropriate can be made to CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services)

## Useful Contact Numbers for advice & support

### Mental Health Support

For immediate assistance regarding mental health support and resources, please refer to the following organisations:

- Kooth
- YoungMinds
- Shout - Text "SHOUT" to 85258 for 24/7 support
- Qwell: If you are an adult requiring mental health
- Kent Resilience Hub

For support around domestic abuse

- SATEDA
- Refuge
- Oasis Domestic Abuse Service

For support with homelessness or housing issues

- Porchlight
- Shelter England

If you have urgent child protection concern please contact:

Kent Children's Por-tal <https://kccchildrens.kent.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home> 03000 411111 Or call 999 and report to Kent Police.





Dear Headteacher,

As the summer holiday approaches, Kent Police would be grateful for your assistance in notifying parents of a current concern over children using catapults, possibly in response to social media. There has been an increase in the number of reports received relating to animals and wildlife being targeted, injured or damaged by objects fired from catapults.

While carrying a catapult is not a criminal offence, its use may lead to criminal liability depending on the circumstances, for example under:

- Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (intentionally killing or injuring any wild bird);
- Section 4 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (causing an animal to suffer);
- Section 1 of the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 (causing unnecessary suffering to any wild mammal);
- Section 1 of the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 (unlawfully having any offensive weapon in a public place, meaning any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to a person, or intended to do so); and
- Section 1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971 (intentionally or recklessly damaging property)

Kent Police would like the following advice to be passed on to parents.

1. Dissuade your children from leaving home with a catapult.
2. Explain to your children that using a catapult to cause damage or harm is a criminal offence.
3. If you wish to dispose of a catapult, contact your local beat officer who will be able to assist (details can be found at [www.kent.police.uk](http://www.kent.police.uk)).

Please forward this letter accordingly.

We are grateful for your assistance in this matter.

Kind regards,

Kent Police

Starting the new academic year, we would like to ensure our school records for your child are accurate & up to date on Arbor. Please do make us aware of any changes in contact details addresses, phone numbers or email addresses.

Please can you always inform the school if your child is living temporarily with another person? It is important we know who and where a student is living in case of emergencies. Please let us know by contacting the main office.

**We hope you all have a safe and enjoyable summer we will see you back at the Abbey School on the 1st of September.**



Safeguarding Team

# NO EXCUSE FOR ABUSE

At The Abbey School, we strive to create a **safe and secure** environment for the school community. Our school is a **welcoming and inclusive place** where we all show one another respect and look out for each other.

We will not tolerate any **threatening, abusive or violent** behaviour and action will be taken when necessary.



**The Abbey**  
School





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01795 532633



Attendance Office

01795 542477

[attendance@abbeyschoolfaversham.co.uk](mailto:attendance@abbeyschoolfaversham.co.uk)

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