The Abbey School

"Be The Best You Can Be"

Safeguarding Newsletter

2025/26

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THE HOWARD
Academy Trust

Safer Internet Day 2026

This week we marked Safer Internet Day 2026, a national event celebrated across the UK to promote the safe, responsible and positive use of digital technology. The day provided an opportunity for students to reflect on how they use the internet, social media and emerging technologies such as AI — and the impact their online choices can have on themselves and others.

Throughout the week, students have taken part in discussions and activities focused on online safety, critical thinking, respectful communication and protecting personal information. As technology continues to evolve, helping young people develop digital awareness and resilience remains a key priority for our school.

We encourage families to continue these conversations at home. Open dialogue between parents and children is one of the most effective ways to support safe and confident internet use.

Supporting Young People to Spot Misinformation Online

Social media plays a big role in young people's lives. While it helps students stay connected, it also makes it easy for rumours and false information to spread quickly through group chats and platforms like TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat. As a school community, we want to help students develop the skills to question what they see online.

What's the difference?
· Misinformation is false or inaccurate information shared without meaning harm.
· Disinformation is false information shared deliberately to mislead or provoke a reaction.
· Both can spread rapidly among young people.

Examples that affect schools
We have seen cases nationally where social media posts have claimed:

· New students from overseas are being given priority places or special benefits.
· Schools are changing policies because of immigration.
· A school will be closed the next day due to an alleged safety issue — often based on a hoax email or anonymous message.

These claims are often unverified, taken out of context, or entirely false. Even so, they can create anxiety, division and disruption within school communities.

How parents can help

· Encourage your child to pause and ask:
· Who posted this originally?
· Can I verify this through a trusted source?
· Is this designed to make me feel angry or worried?
· Remind students not to forward or repost unverified claims, and to check official school communication for accurate information.

By working together, we can support our young people to become thoughtful, responsible digital citizens and help maintain a calm, respectful school community.

QUIZ TIME

Online Safety Quick-Fire Quiz for Parents

How confident are you about spotting misinformation and supporting your teenager online? Try our quick quiz:

1. True or False?
If lots of people have shared a post, it's likely to be true.

2. Which is the safest first step if your child shows you a worrying post about school?
A) Share it in the parent WhatsApp group
B) Screenshot and repost it
C) Check official school communication or trusted news sources

3. True or False?
Anonymous accounts are just as reliable as official sources.

4. What makes misinformation more likely to spread?
A) Calm, balanced language
B) Strong emotions like anger or fear
C) Detailed evidence from multiple sources

5. True or False?
Forwarding a message "just in case it's true" can still cause harm.

Conversation Starter

Ask your teenager: "How do you decide whether something online is trustworthy?"Open conversations at home are one of the most effective ways to build digital resilience.

Help is also available with NSPCC
Fake news, hoaxes and misinformation | NSPCC

A Parent Guide to Safe and Positive Use of AI at Home

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT and other online platforms are becoming a regular part of young people's digital lives. Used well, AI can be a powerful tool to support learning, revision and creativity. Used poorly, it can limit progress or lead to academic concerns.

As a school, we want to help families understand how AI can be used safely, responsibly and effectively at home.

How AI Can Support Learning
When used appropriately, AI can help students to:

Revise and Consolidate Learning
- Generate quiz questions to test knowledge
- Explain difficult concepts in different ways
- Create revision summaries (which students should then check and edit)

Improve Writing
- Suggest ways to structure an essay
- Offer feedback on clarity and grammar
- Help brainstorm ideas before writing independently

Build Study Skills
- Create revision timetables
- Break down large tasks into manageable steps
- Provide practice questions

Used in these ways, AI supports learning — it doesn't replace

Risks to Be Aware Of
While AI has benefits, there are important limitations:

- AI can make mistakes. Information is not always accurate or up to date.
- Over-reliance can reduce learning. If students copy answers rather than thinking for themselves, they miss vital practice.
- Work may not reflect a student's true ability, which can create difficulties in lessons and assessments.
- Privacy matters. Students should not share personal information or sensitive school details with AI tools.

How Parents Can Support Safe Use at Home
Here are some simple ways to guide your child:

Focus on Learning, Not Shortcuts
Encourage your child to use AI to support understanding — for example, asking it to explain a concept — rather than to complete work for them.

Encourage Checking and Editing
If AI generates notes or answers, ask your child:
- Does this make sense?
- Can you explain it in your own words?
- Have you checked it against your textbook or class notes?

ChatGPT

Talk About Academic Integrity
Remind students that submitting AI-generated work as their own may count as plagiarism. Schools are increasingly able to identify work that is not authentic.

Keep Communication Open
Ask your child how they are using AI tools. A non-judgemental conversation helps build responsible habits.

Questions You Could Ask at Home
· "How did AI help you understand that topic?"
· "What did you change or improve yourself?"
· "How do you know the information is accurate?"

These conversations help young people develop critical thinking and digital responsibility.

Working Together
AI is likely to remain part of education and the workplace. By helping students use it thoughtfully — as a tool for support rather than substitution — we prepare them for the future while protecting the integrity of their learning.

If you have any questions about how AI is used in school, please don't hesitate to contact us.

For more parental tips and information go to [Artificial intelligence safety tips for parents | NSPCC](#)

Supporting LGBT+ Students: A Parent's Guide

As our school community grows more diverse, understanding and supporting LGBT+ students is vital. Research shows that parental acceptance greatly improves mental health and confidence. Here's how you can show support:

Lead With Love- When your child shares their identity, respond with care:

"I love you."
"Thank you for trusting me."
"I may need time to learn, but I'm here for you."
Even small expressions of love make a big difference.
Listen and Ask Thoughtful Questions
Show interest without judgment:
"How long have you known?"
"How can I support you right now?"

Avoid phrases like:

"Are you sure?"
"It's just a phase."

Learn the Basics- Understanding terms helps reduce fear and confusion:

Term
Meaning
Sexual Orientation
Who someone is attracted to
Gender Identity
One's internal sense of gender
Transgender
Gender identity differs from birth-assigned sex
Nonbinary
Not exclusively male or female

Respect Names and Pronouns- Using your child's chosen name and pronouns:

Shows respect
Builds trust
Improves mental health
If you make a mistake, correct yourself and move on—don't make your child comfort you

Prioritize Safety- LGBT+ students can face bullying or discrimination. Make sure your child feels safe:

At home
At school
Online
Be proactive and advocate when necessary.

The Bottom Line- You don't have to understand everything to support your child. Showing love, respect, and acceptance matters most.

Wellbeing Spotlight - By Mrs Le Brunn-Healey

Mrs Le Brunn Healey Assistant Principal Oversees and delivers the Personal, Social Health and Emotional Education (PSHE) in school covering a number of important topics to support student learning, health and wellbeing. PSHE and Safeguarding are topics which often go hand in hand.

What Every Parent and Carer Needs to Know

Vaping is becoming increasingly visible among young people in town centres, online, and, worryingly, in and around schools across the United Kingdom. Many students believe vapes are harmless, "just flavoured air," or a safe alternative to smoking. This is a dangerous misconception that we are working hard to challenge as a school community.

As part of our Personal Development programme, working closely with the safeguarding team, we recently spoke to Year 9 students about vaping and followed this with a short knowledge quiz to check what they could recall. We are sharing the key messages with you so that home and school can work together to keep young people informed and safe.

These messages are not delivered just once. Students revisit learning about vaping, health and informed choices at different points throughout their time with us.

Most vapes contain nicotine and this was something many of our students did not know. Nicotine is the same highly addictive substance found in cigarettes. The vapour also contains chemicals used to create flavourings and aerosols that are inhaled directly into the lungs.

Emerging evidence links vaping to:
· Lung irritation and damage
· Breathing difficulties and chest pain
· Increased heart rate and blood pressure
· Headaches, dizziness, and nausea
· Rapid nicotine addiction

Another key message students were surprised to learn is that young people are particularly at risk. Adolescent brains are still developing into the mid-20s and nicotine interferes with key cognitive functions such as:
· Memory and concentration
· Emotional regulation
· Decision-making and impulse control
·
This means vaping can begin to affect learning, mood, friendships, and behaviour far sooner than many realise.

Some vapes appear harmless. They are deliberately designed to appeal to young people with; sweet flavours such as mango, bubblegum, and candy floss; bright, highlighter-style packaging and they are constructed as small, concealable devices This is intentional marketing that makes vaping appear fun, safe, and normal.

If you are concerned that your son or daughter may be vaping, signs to look out for include:
· Sweet, unfamiliar smells on clothing or in bedrooms
· Increased thirst or nosebleeds
· Headaches or dizziness
· Irritability or mood changes linked to nicotine withdrawal
· Small, colourful devices that resemble USB sticks or highlighters

It is also important to acknowledge the role modelling that happens at home. Young people notice far more than we realise. Their perceptions of vaping, smoking, and health are shaped not only by what we say, but by what they see. You can support by:
· Avoiding vaping or smoking around them
· Talking openly about why you choose not to vape or your own journey to stop
· Modelling healthy ways to manage stress
· Reinforcing that looking after your body is a lifelong skill

We often talk to students about their Personal Development Backpack. This refers to the life skills, knowledge and habits they carry into adulthood. Understanding the risks of vaping, knowing how to say no, asking for help, and seeing positive role models at home are all things that go into that backpack.

If you are concerned, a calm, factual conversation is most effective. You might ask what they are hearing about vaping, whether they know what is actually in a vape, or if they would feel confident saying no if offered one.

Support is available if you need it:
·   Contact your child's Head of Year
·   Access advice via NHS Better Health quit vaping support
·   Encourage your child to speak to Childline on 0800 1111
·   Contact FRANK on 0300 123 6600

The key safeguarding message is simple.
Vaping is not harmless.
It is not just flavoured air.
*And it is not risk-free for young people.*

By working together, school and home can help young people make informed, safe choices for their future.

Online Safety Quick-Fire Quiz for Parents Answers how did you do? How confident are you about spotting misinformation and supporting your teenager online? Try our quick quiz:

1. Answer: False. Posts can go viral because they're shocking or emotional — not because they're accurate.
2. Which is the safest first step if your child shows you a worrying post about school? Answer: C
3. Anonymous accounts are just as reliable as official sources. Answer: False. Always consider who created the content and why.
4. Answer: B Detailed evidence from multiple sources
5. Forwarding a message "just in case it's true" can still cause harm. Answer: True. Sharing unverified information can increase anxiety and disruption.

We hope you can all enjoy the half term break and stay safe please see below a list of useful contacts should you need additional support during the holidays.

Safeguarding Team
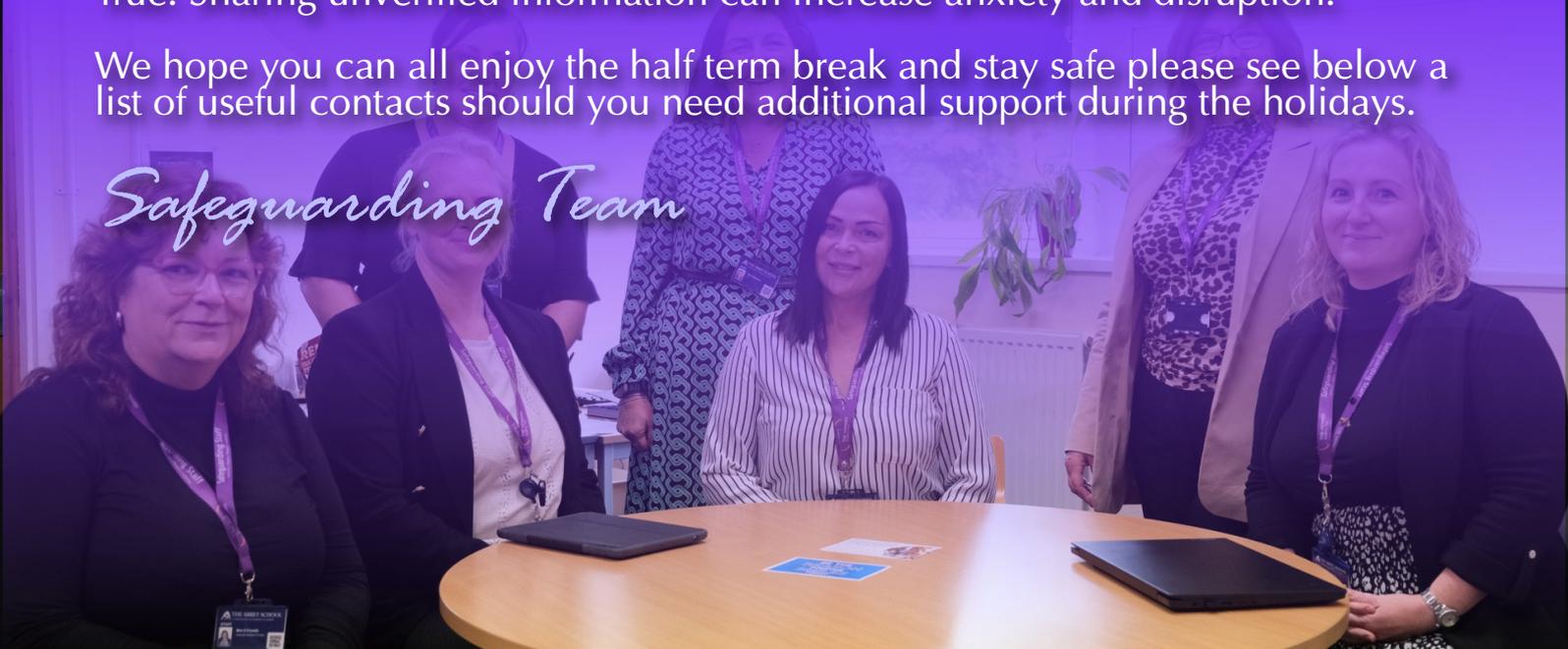
Mental Health Support

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

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

If you have any urgent concerns for a young person (self harming/ attempted suicide) please take directly to A&E and request Crisis Team or 999

For financial/ cost of living difficulties

- Citizens Advice
- Faversham Foodbank

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 Portal or call 03000 411111

Or call 999 and report to Kent Police.

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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