

# Stoke Park Primary School—Safeguarding Newsletter

December 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are fast approaching the Christmas holidays and the children and staff are busy preparing for all the Christmas festivities.

Whilst Christmas can be an exciting time, we know that for some it can be a difficult time for many reasons. We are here to support any families who may find the Christmas period difficult so please do get in touch if you are worried. We can signpost to local services who may be able to help.

This terms 'spotlight on' feature is on discriminatory language. I have talked with the children in assembly today about this and the importance of being a 'defender' when they hear discriminatory language being used.

As always, if you want to discuss anything further, please get in touch.

Amy Higgitt

Assistant Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead



## Spotlight on: Discrimination

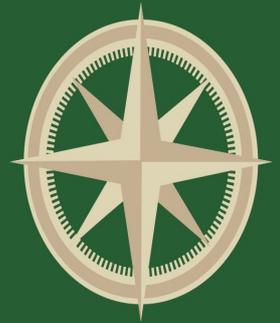
Discrimination is “treating someone unfairly because of who they are.” ([Citizens Advice, 2022](#)). This means that a person is being treated differently or is put at a disadvantage because of someone else’s opinions or judgements of them.

By law, there are 9 characteristics that are protected from discrimination under the [Equality Act 2010](#):

- Age
- Disability
- Religion/Belief
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy/Maternity
- Race/Ethnicity
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

If someone is targeted or treated unfairly because of one or more of these characteristics, then they are being unlawfully discriminated against. This also includes someone being treated differently because another person *thinks* that they belong to a group with a protected characteristic, whether it’s true or not.

At Stoke Park we celebrate diversity and teach the importance of this to the pupils. We do not tolerate discrimination in any form and it will always be challenged. When children use discriminatory language, we always follow this up with the pupil and the parent/carer and educate the pupil on why this language is not acceptable.



**STOKE  
PARK  
PRIMARY**

## The Safeguarding team.

The Safeguarding team. If you have any concerns about a child's welfare or safety, please speak to a member of the schools safeguarding team



Mrs Higgitt—Designated safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Mrs Lambert—Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Mrs Dennison—Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Or contact **First Response** on:  
01179036444

**Staying safe online**

Many children will be receiving devices over the Christmas period. We strongly advise that parent controls are set up on their devices before the children are allowed to use them. Safer Internet have lots of information for parents about setting up parental controls. They also recommend having open and honest conversations with children about their online use.

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/online-issue/parental-controls>

**Age restrictions of Social Media Apps**

Please be mindful that social media apps are not appropriate for pupils under the age of 13. Below are the age restrictions for the most popular apps:

What's App—16 years +

Instagram—13 years +

Facebook—13 years +

Snapchat—13 years +

TikTok—13 Years +

**What are the risk of children using social media apps?**

- Many sites include an instant message function that allows private conversations between site members.
- Most social networking sites have an app version available, meaning your child will have access to the social network from their smartphone or tablet. Some app versions of social networks use the location of the phone.
- Information shared between friends can be easily copied and may spread.
- It isn't easy to take back information that has been posted – and can be impossible if it's already been shared.
- Not everyone your child meets online will be who they say they are. Chatrooms and forums can connect people who are complete strangers and can be unmoderated.
- Chatrooms and forums are some of the places online groomers go to connect with children. They can also be places where people use a lot of sexual language and engage in online flirting. This is sometimes done through video chat programs.

**Useful contacts:**

First Response: To report any safeguarding concerns. This can be done anonymously. 01179036444

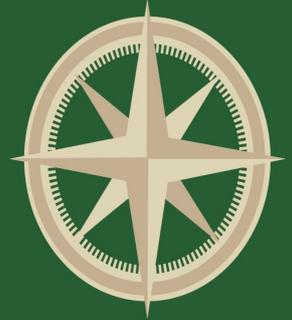
North Bristol Foodbanks (0117 9791399) For areas covered see here: <https://northbristol.foodbank.org.uk/locations/>

[Young Minds](#): supporting children and young people's mental health

[Mind](#): adult mental health support and information

[Refuge](#): domestic abuse support

[Saneline](#): Emotional Support: 07984 967 708 (leave name and number and someone will call you back)



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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 entrails 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.

## Meet Our Expert

Shazia Sarwar-Azmi 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.



## 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.

Sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-63248905>  
<https://prosocial.com/the-high-social-media-algorithm/>

**NOS** National Online Safety®  
#WakeUpWednesday