# ICS Safeguarding Newsletter 2

## Harmful and Disturbing Content Online

We are aware that a small number of our secondary students may have come across, and in some cases shared, disturbing videos online linked to an incident which occurred yesterday in the United States involving a well-known social media influencer.

This generation's easy access to global news means that many students may have already seen or heard about the violent footage connected to this event.

**Why This Matters**

Exposure to violent or graphic content can:

- Cause fear, sadness, or anxiety.
- Reduce sensitivity to the suffering of others.
- Place young people at risk of thinking that sharing such material is acceptable or without consequence.
- Lead to harm within friendships or the wider community when such content is circulated.

Our shared goal as parents and educators is to help children develop resilience and wisdom when navigating the digital world, while protecting their emotional wellbeing.

**What You Can Do at Home**

- **Speak calmly with your child**: Ask if they have seen anything upsetting online, and give them space to share their feelings.
- **Reassure them**: Explain that it is normal to feel disturbed or upset when seeing violent material.
- **Guide their choices**: Remind them not to share videos or images that could harm others.
- **Model healthy habits**: Encourage balanced use of technology, with time for family, study, sport, and rest.
- **Stay involved**: Where possible, keep an eye on your child's online activity and discuss what is appropriate to view or share.

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## Pexels.com and Beyond



Recently, our Blocksi monitoring system has flagged a number of students attempting to access **pexels.com**, a free stock photo and video site. While Pexels itself is not designed to be harmful harmful - it is widely used by designers and marketers - some of the images hosted there may not be appropriate for young people. Because the platform does not require age verification, students may stumble across material that is unsuitable or distracting.

We encourage parents to talk with their children about why they may be seeking out websites like Pexels. Sometimes it is genuine curiosity about photography or creative media, but at other times it may be driven by a desire to access images that are not intended for their age group. Having open, non-judgemental conversations about what they are searching for online, and why, can make a big difference.

## New Apps Parents Should Know About

Alongside established platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, new apps are constantly emerging, many of which aim to capture young people's attention. Three current examples include:
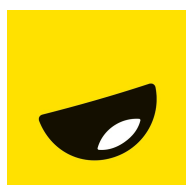


- **Yubo** – marketed as a way to 'make new friends', but its live-streaming features can expose children to strangers.

- **Discord** – originally created for gamers, but increasingly used for unmoderated chatrooms, some of which contain inappropriate content.

- **Whisper** – an anonymous posting app where young people may share personal information without considering who can read it.

While not all students will be using these platforms, awareness is key. We recommend parents regularly check which apps are installed on their child's phone

and discuss together the risks of anonymous or unmoderated communication online.

Encourage children to think critically: *Would I want my parents, teacher, or future employer to see this post?* If the answer is "no," it may not be safe to share.

## Attendance Matters – A Safeguarding Priority



Attendance is not just an academic issue - it is a **safeguarding concern**. Poor or irregular attendance can sometimes indicate that a student is facing difficulties at home or in school. Patterns of absence may be linked to anxiety, bullying, health challenges, or even neglect. That is why schools across the world treat attendance as a key part of their safeguarding responsibilities.

We ask all parents to support good attendance by:

- **Ensuring children arrive on time each morning.**

- **Communicating clearly with the school if illness or emergencies arise.**

- **Seeking medical appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.**

Good attendance means students are not only learning consistently but are also visible to trusted adults every day. This visibility is one of the strongest protective factors for our young people.

## What Parents Can Do – Practical Safeguarding at Home

Safeguarding is most effective when home and school work together. Here are some simple ways parents can help:

- **Set boundaries** for online use – consider device-free times (such as family meals) and keep phones out of bedrooms overnight.

# ICS Safeguarding Newsletter 2

- **Check in regularly** – ask your child about their friendships, both online and offline, and listen without rushing to judgement.

- **Model healthy habits** – let children see adults balancing screen time with exercise, hobbies, and face-to-face conversations.

- **Stay informed** – apps and websites change quickly. If you are unsure about an app your child is using, look it up together and talk about the risks.

When children know that the adults in their lives are watching out for them, they are more likely to share worries early, helping us all to keep them safe.