## Understanding the links between social media use and mental health in children.
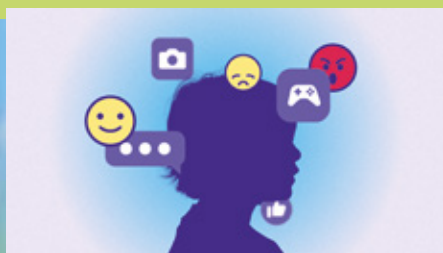
Multiple studies have found a strong link between heavy social media use and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts. Social media may promote negative feelings such as: Inadequacy about your life or appearance.

A 2018 British study tied social media use to decreased, disrupted, and delayed sleep, which is associated with depression, memory loss, and poor academic performance. Social media use can affect users' physical health even more directly.

Researchers know the connection between the mind and the gut can turn anxiety and depression into nausea, headaches, muscle tension, and tremors.

## Mental health

Not only has social media been proven to cause unhappiness, but it can also lead to the development of mental health issues such as anxiety or depression when used too much or without caution.

### Mental health risks and benefits of internet use by adolescents

Some young people may find it easier talking online, including to people they've not met in person, or they might want to find others who are going through the same things as them. It is important to support children to think about who they're talking to and if it's helping them to feel better.

Just as in the offline world, bullying can happen online on social networking sites too. Watch out for the signs and make sure that they know what to do if it happens to them.

## Ask them to think about the following:

- Does talking to them make you feel like things will never change, or do they give you hope that you'll feel better, and things will improve?
- Do they stop you seeking support from other people, or encourage you to talk to others too?
- Do you feel better or worse after talking to them?

Risk/Benefit Assessment: sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental health/trauma, access to technology, parenting/family factors

Health and Functioning, Well-being and self-esteem, Identity Development, Social group development, Creativity, Cyberbullying, Problematic Internet Use ("Internet addiction"), Sexting/Privacy Concerns

| | Facebook | Instagram | Snapchat | TikTok | Twitter | Wink |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Age Rating: 13+ | | | |
| Main Features | newsfeed to share text, photos & videos, instant messaging, marketplace, friends, likes and comments. | photo & video sharing, livestreaming, stories, DMs, hashtags. | photo & video messaging, snaps, location sharing | making & sharing short videos, lip-syncing. | tweets (text with restricted character count), photo and video sharing, hashtags. | messaging, friends, photo sharing. |

## Safety settings in chat apps

A risk for children and young people using chat apps is being added to group chats where they don't know the other people in the group, which could increase the chance they come across upsetting or negative messages.
Many of the chat apps have different privacy settings to help restrict who can contact you. If your child is using a chat app, we'd recommend looking at the privacy settings to see what's most appropriate. If there aren't any options to restrict contact then we'd recommend that your child doesn't use the app.

### Talk to your child about what they're sharing

It is important for children and young people to be aware of what they are sharing online and who might see it. It can be helpful to compare it to what they would be happy to share offline.

For example, they shouldn't give their phone number to someone they didn't know who approached them on the street, so it's important to not give it to someone you've only met online.

Remind them that they shouldn't share private things, such as:
- personal information, like emails, names, phone numbers, location and school names
- photos of themselves
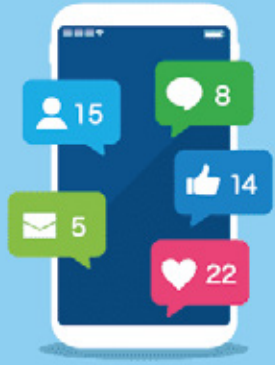- photos of their body, such as sexual photos or videos.

Children and young people should also consider that what they are sharing online may be shared further, to people they don't know, and they don't have control once it has been shared.

As always, if you have any issues around your child's mental health and well-being, please contact a member of the safeguarding team, or your child's Head of Year.

## Popular Chat Apps

- WhatsApp
- Omegle
- Telegram
- Viber
- Signal
- Facebook messenger
- Discord
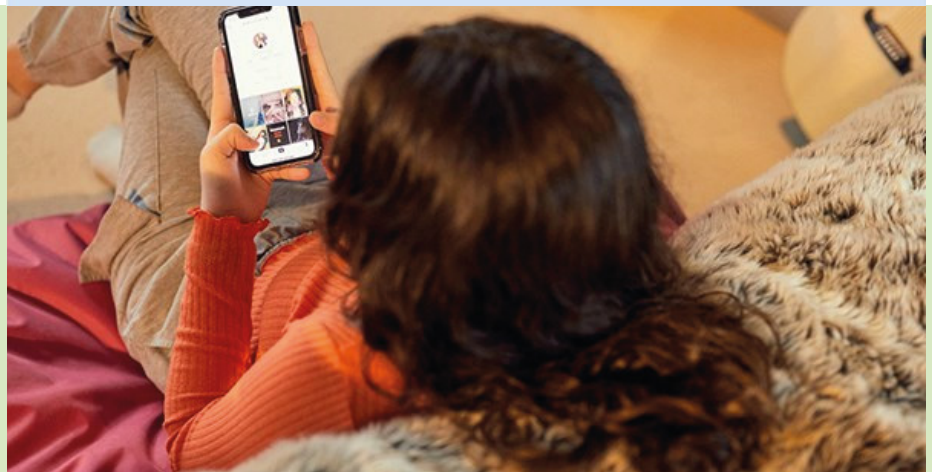- Snapchat
- Kik



## The Sutton Academy

# WhatsApp

## Safety Settings

To prevent children being added to groups by people they don't know in WhatsApp, we recommend changing the group chat settings from 'Everyone' to 'My Contacts Except…' and using the tick icon to select all contacts.

The 'My Contacts Except…' option means only your child's phone contacts, except those you exclude, can add your child to groups. But by selecting all contacts, it means that nobody should be able to add your child to a group chat without first sending them an invitation

There are lots of helpful hints and tips to keep your child safe online at:

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/

# CHILD MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA



**Signs they're Struggling Online**
- Nervous when using their phone
- Secretive about activity
- Socially withdrawn

**How to Keep them Safe**
- Use privacy settings
- Talk about their life online
- Introduce basic boundaries







**VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO VIEW/DOWNLOAD SOME USEFUL PARENT GUIDES FROM NATIONAL ONLINE SAFETY**

https://www.thesuttonacade-my.org.uk/safeguard-ing-and-wellbeing/parents