



The Cambridge Primary School



Newsletter – Spring 1 Issued 30th January 2026

DSL



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Our Safeguarding Team

Our safeguarding team includes a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding leads (DDSL).

The named safeguarding governor is Mrs Pitfield

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DDSL



Mrs Kennedy
Executive
Headteacher

Mrs Edwards
Assistant Headteacher
Lower School Lead

Miss Holmes
Assistant Headteacher
Upper School Lead



Mr Tomlinson
Assistant Headteacher
SENCO & Inclusion
Lead

Mrs Valva
Family
Support
Advisor

Mr McCormack
Class Teacher
Designated Online
Safety Lead

NSPCC Speak out Stay safe Programme

Over the next two weeks, the children will be taking part in the [child friendly programme from the NSPCC](#). It is aligned with the curriculum and consists of age appropriate virtual assemblies and supporting classroom based activities, which we have reviewed. The content is delivered in an engaging and interactive way with the help of the NSPCC mascot Buddy.



This issue is focused on Social Media, Devices & Children's Wellbeing

Children are growing up in a world shaped by smartphones, tablets, gaming and social media. Online spaces can offer creativity, learning and connection — but they can also expose children to pressures that affect sleep, self-esteem and wellbeing.

As part of our ongoing staff training on safeguarding, children's mental health and online safety, we have been reviewing UK evidence and current research on how digital life is influencing young people. This newsletter shares the key messages and practical steps families can take at home.

Why we are focusing on social media and devices?

Across the UK, more children and young people are experiencing mental health difficulties. National reports suggest this is linked to a range of factors — including recovery from the pandemic, wider social pressures, and the changing digital environment.

- Around 1 in 6 children aged 5–16 are likely to have a mental health problem.
- National reports also highlight that mental wellbeing has been declining since 2016–17, and many young people report their mental health worsens while waiting for support.

What research suggests

[Jonathan Haidt](#) describes a shift from a “play-based childhood” to a “phone-based childhood”. His work points to the early 2010s as a turning point in youth wellbeing in many Western countries, when smartphone ownership and social media use rapidly expanded.

UK government and public health organisations emphasise that the evidence is complex: some studies find small but consistent links between heavier social media use and poorer mental health, while also noting that cause-and-effect can be difficult to prove. Where there is stronger agreement is around specific risks — such as disrupted sleep, online harassment and bullying, and appearance-related comparison — and how these can interact with a child’s individual vulnerabilities.

Impact of social media

Evidence from large UK studies suggests that starting social media in early adolescence and spending longer on social platforms is associated with poorer mental health outcomes — especially where it affects sleep, self-esteem and body image.

- Appearance-focused content and “perfect” images (often edited or filtered) can intensify body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem.
- Algorithm-driven feeds can keep children in a cycle of comparison, making it harder to “switch off”.
- Social conflict can feel constant through group chats, comments and “likes”, and may affect mood and confidence.
- Later bedtimes and disturbed sleep routines are linked to poorer wellbeing; late-night scrolling can reduce rest and recovery.

One major UK study using the Millennium Cohort Study (14-year-olds) found that higher daily social media use was linked with higher depressive symptom scores, and that this relationship appeared to operate through pathways including online harassment, poor sleep, low self-esteem and poor body image.

More recent UK cohort research suggests that social media use in early adolescence (around age 11) can be prospectively associated with psychiatric problems in later adolescence. In that work, the link was partly explained by later bedtimes, disrupted sleep and negative self-image — factors that are particularly important in early and mid-adolescence.

UK national data also shows that children with mental health difficulties are more likely to report being bullied both in person and online, underlining how digital interactions can add another layer of pressure for some young people.

Possible signs a child may be struggling online

You might notice:

- Changes in sleep (late-night use, tiredness, difficulty waking).
- Becoming more anxious, tearful, irritable or withdrawn after using devices.
- Sudden changes in friendship groups or reluctance to attend school.
- Increased secrecy about devices, deleting messages, or distress when the phone is removed.
- Negative talk about appearance or worth (e.g., “I’m ugly”, “nobody likes me”).

What helps: practical steps families can take

Small, consistent changes often have the biggest impact:

- Protect sleep: keep phones/tablets out of bedrooms overnight; aim for a screen-free wind down before bedtime.
- Create device-free routines: start with meals, car journeys, and the first/last hour of the day.
- Delay and supervise: where possible, delay social media accounts and keep settings private; co-use apps with younger children.
- Talk little and often: ask how apps make them feel, what they see, and what they do if something worries them.
- Build offline balance: regular outdoor play, clubs, reading, and face-to-face time with friends support resilience.
- Use parental controls: set time limits, restrict downloads, and review privacy settings together.

What the school is doing

We will continue to:

- Teach online safety and digital wellbeing through our curriculum.
- Promote positive peer relationships, kindness, and respectful communication.
- Encourage play, physical activity and offline social time throughout the school day.
- Use our safeguarding systems to respond promptly to concerns, including online issues or worries about self-harm.

If you are worried

If you have concerns about your child's online experiences or emotional wellbeing, please contact the school so we can support you. If you believe your child is at immediate risk of harm, seek urgent help via NHS services or emergency services.

Useful support (UK):

- Childline: 0800 1111 (free, confidential support for children).
- NHS: contact your GP or NHS 111 for advice

Sources

- NHS England / NHS Digital: Mental Health of Children and Young People (MHCYP) survey series, including 2023 wave 4 follow-up.
- Centre for Mental Health & Mind: The Big Mental Health Report 2025.
- The Children's Society: Children's mental health statistics.
- UK Government (DSIT), 20 Jan 2026: Executive summary on impacts of smartphones and social media on children and young people.
- Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH): #StatusOfMind report on social media and young people's mental health.
- Millennium Cohort Study analysis: social media use, depressive symptoms and pathways via sleep/self-esteem/body image (eClinicalMedicine, 2019).
- UK cohort analysis: social media use at age 11 and later psychiatric outcomes via sleep and self-image (Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology, 2025).
- Jonathan Haidt: work on the "phone-based childhood" and youth wellbeing trends.

Smartphone Free Childhood

If you would like further information about the impact of using smartphones in childhood and how groups are supporting parents to navigate the challenges, look at this website.

Our mission is to bring people together to stand up for healthier, happier childhoods.

Smartphone Free Childhood isn't about banning tech or turning back time – it's about giving children more of what really matters: time, connection, and freedom to be kids.

We help families delay smartphones and social media together – building community, sharing support, and changing the conversation. Step by step. Brick (phone) by brick (phone).

*Because real change doesn't come from the top down. It starts with all of us, working together.
United for childhood.*



The two highlighted areas of the website have information about the problem, solution and evidence of smartphone use and there is a parent section with guidance in the resources page.

If you have any suggestions for our safeguarding newsletter or would like to know more information about any safeguarding topics, please contact: info@cambridgeschool.hants.sch.uk or speak to one of the safeguarding team.

Who to contact if you are concerned about a child

If you are worried about a child's safety, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the DSL Team via the school office info@cambridgeschol.hants.sch.uk

For general concerns about a child's safety: Contact Hampshire Children's Services at 0300 555 1384 during office hours or 0300 555 1373 out of hours.