

Week 14



Jan 23

SAFE AT SUMMERHILL

At Summerhill School we are committed to Safeguarding our children and young people as well as promoting positive well-being for all.

This safeguarding newsletter, aims to help staff, parents and students alike to be aware of Safeguarding and mental-health issues, giving you useful links and resources to use if you have concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact us on the main school number 01384 816165 or via email on studentsupport@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk

Andrew Tate

You will have heard the name Andrew Tate on the news recently. This [BBC article](#) explains some of the concerns regarding Andrew Tate and how to talk to your child about the issues he raises. We will also be talking to students and staff about this topic next week.

Fearless



Most people are familiar with Crimestoppers, which is an organisation that allows members of the public to report crime, or information that may be useful to the Police, in an anonymous way. Fearless is a site where children and teenagers can access non-judgemental information and advice about crime and criminality. Like Crimestoppers, to which it is affiliated, Fearless also provides a safe place to give information to them about crime - 100% anonymously. Click the logo above to access their website.

Young Minds Parental Help Line

Young Minds are a charity that support parents and children with their mental health. One of the services they offer is a parental helpline for parents and carers who are concerned about their child's mental health, up to the age of 25.

You can call their Parents Helpline on 0808 802 5544, Monday - Friday 9:30am - 4:00pm.

- You'll get through to a trained adviser who will listen and talk through your concerns in complete confidence.
- Your adviser will help you to understand your child's behaviour and give you practical advice on what to do next.
- If you need further help, they'll arrange for one of our independent, experienced professionals to call you for a 50-minute telephone consultation within seven days.
- Please note, calls may be recorded for monitoring or training purposes.

What Parents Need to Know about Twitter

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about TWITTER

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

Twitter is a social media network which allows users to post short messages (tweets) of up to 280 characters. Tweets can consist of text, photos, videos, audio, links, polls and GIFs – often linked by hashtags if they share a common theme or message. Hashtags receiving high levels of interest are said to be 'trending'. Twitter users can engage with other people's posts by liking, retweeting (sharing) or tweeting back (commenting on). Since the entrepreneur Elon Musk acquired Twitter in October 2022 for \$44 billion, he has implemented several major changes to the platform.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

INTERACTION WITH STRANGERS

Tweets are public by default, meaning that anyone can view and interact with posts, follow someone and send direct messages. The concern here is that young people may therefore connect and communicate with strangers. Some individuals may follow a young person's Twitter account simply because they have similar interests; however, others may turn out to have more sinister intentions.

FIXATION ON VIEW COUNT

Twitter has recently introduced a 'view count' feature – telling users how many people have seen their tweet (even if they haven't reacted to it). Previous research has found that unfavourable comparisons with other social media users can cause young people to experience feelings of insecurity, jealousy and low self-esteem – leading to an obsession with increasing their numbers.

TROLLS AND BULLYING

The anonymity offered by fake profiles encourages some users to send tweets designed to provoke a reaction; to disrupt conversations; to spark an argument; or to harass the recipient. Such trolling and bullying can impact the mental well-being of both the target and anyone who witnesses it. Encourage your child to come to you if they experience such behaviour on Twitter, or if they see it taking place.

PAID-FOR VERIFICATION

Previously, if a Twitter profile displayed a blue tick icon, it meant that the owner – usually a celebrity or a major organisation – had been verified as genuine. Now, however, anyone can pay for a Twitter 'blue subscription' to receive the tick, with the platform carrying out limited checks on the account's authenticity. This could easily lead to more fake accounts impersonating real people or companies.

CONTENT MODERATION CHANGES

In late 2022, Twitter stated that their 'policy enforcement' will rely more heavily on de-amplification of violent content; freedom of speech, but not freedom of reach. No policies have changed yet, but this wording suggests they may limit who can see posts, rather than removing them. While supporting free speech, this could encourage an environment where some toxic content remains online.

HIJACKED HASHTAGS

The hashtag (#) is one of Twitter's most recognisable facets, allowing users to find specific trends or topics. But the sheer volume of tweets each hour can rapidly distort a hashtag's meaning: an initially innocent search term can quickly end up returning inappropriate results. This is common with 'trending' hashtags, as people know that using them will get their tweet seen by a larger audience.

Advice for Parents & Carers

SET ACCOUNTS TO PRIVATE

To reduce some of the fear of your child's tweets being seen and shared by anyone, you can always make their account protected. This means that your child has to give approval for another user to view their posts. You can change Twitter's privacy settings so that your child can't be messaged directly by other people on the platform and their geographical location won't be shared.

FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING

It can be difficult for anyone to ascertain if something online is real or false, but particularly for young people. Encourage your child to check several reputable sources to determine if a story they've seen is true; remind them to watch out for scams and think about the message's possible motive. Emphasise that it's not a good idea to retweet something if they aren't sure it's correct.

ENGAGE SAFETY MODE

When Safety Mode is activated, Twitter checks for abusive or spammy behaviour such as hurtful language or repeated negative replies. The platform then flags these suspect accounts and blocks them from responding to your child's tweets. The autoblock function then prevents these accounts from interacting with your child's again for seven days.

EXPLORE THE NEW SETTINGS

Previously, any user could reply to anyone else's tweets. However, the new conversation settings let your child determine who can reply to their posts – either by selecting everyone (the default option), people they follow or only people they mention (using the @ symbol). This improvement has given users extra control, providing them with more protection from trolls and online abuse.

PAUSE BEFORE POSTING

It's important that young people think about what they're about to post and whether they might regret it later. Twitter has developed 'nudges': little prompts which appear if someone is about to tweet using harmful or offensive language. These nudges promote more positive online behaviour by giving users an opportunity to pause and consider their words before they post something.

BLOCK, REPORT OR MUTE

If someone is upsetting your child on Twitter, you can block and report them. Blocking stops them from messaging or following your child, while reporting an account alerts Twitter to investigate possible misuse. The 'mute' feature, meanwhile, keeps tweets from a specific account (or which include certain words) out of your child's timeline. The other user won't know that they've been muted.

BE CAREFUL WHO TO FOLLOW

As accounts are no longer being as rigorously verified under the 'blue tick' system, it's essential that young Twitter users understand what this means, in terms of people not necessarily being who they claim. Anyone who your child only knows online is still a stranger, regardless of how long they've been communicating for. Remind your child never to disclose personal information on social media.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Butlerford is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented online bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government concerning internet use and gaming behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

NOS National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

Source: <https://blog.twitter.com/en/common/thread/en/topics/business/2022/how-twitter-is-tackling-negative-online-conversations> | https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2022/twitter-t4-update | https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2022/twitter-blue-checkmarks-verified-accounts | <https://ditchtheinternet.co.uk/about-us/press-releases/2022/03/23/ditchtheinternet-2022-report>



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Lead



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Mr Quirke
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Mr Cresswell
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Safeguarding
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