

Welcome to this week's SMRT safeguarding update...

WAKE UP WEDNESDAY

Safeguarding LGBTQ+ Students

All children and young people have the right to be protected and kept safe from abuse and neglect. At SMRT we ensure that this is our priority and that we safeguard and support all students in our care, allowing them to enjoy their learning, experience success and realise their full potential.

LGBTQ+ children and young people face the same risks as all children and young people, but they are at greater risk of some types of abuse. For example, they might experience homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or hate crime. They might also be more vulnerable to or at greater risk of sexual abuse, online abuse or sexual exploitation (Barnardo's and Fox, 2016; McGeeney et al, 2017; Xu and Zheng, 2014). At SMRT we challenge, educate and sanction any students using discriminatory terms and ensure that all students affected are offered support. Our Behaviour and Good Relationships policy outlines this approach here: <https://www.smrt.bristol.sch.uk/key-information/policies>

We know that puberty can be a particularly distressing and sometimes traumatic time for LGBTQ+ children and young people as their body and hormones start to change. They might start to have new or confusing feelings about their gender or sexuality. This can be particularly distressing if young people don't have anyone to talk about things with or don't feel supported; at SMRT we make sure that every student has the opportunity to build good relationships with a trusted adult and have the opportunity to talk.

Research suggests that LGBTQ+ children and young people might be at higher risk than their non-LGBTQ+ peers of:

- self-harm
- experiencing suicidal thoughts and feelings
- anxiety
- depression

(McDermott, Hughes and Rawlings, 2018; LGBT Health & Wellbeing, Scottish Trans, Equality Network, LGBT Youth Scotland and Stonewall Scotland, 2018; Becerra-Culqui, 2018).

There are some factors that might mean LGBTQ+ children and young people feel less able to speak out about any worries or negative experiences they're having.

At SMRT we have pastoral support available for all students through our pastoral, safeguarding and mental health teams. Students have safe spaces and are able to speak to their Heads of Year, Deputy Heads of Year and Learning Mentors every day. We also have Club Q available weekly to any students who want to find further support or discuss issues that relate to LGBTQ+ experiences and Mrs Francombe (Head of VIP) is available to talk to students. Topics around

sexuality and gender identity (Relationships Sex Education) education is taught through our VIP and pastoral curriculum and the guidance we follow is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

If there is any further support that you feel that you or your child may need in this area, please see the local groups available below and resources for support and information below from Creative Youth Network and Childline.

<https://www.creativeyouthnetwork.org.uk/proud-to-be-lgbtq-group>

[Gender identity | Childline](#)

[LGBTQ+ terms | Childline](#)

As always, if you would like to discuss this Wake up Wednesday, have any suggestions about how we can ensure students feel like they belong or find out about any of our approaches to safeguarding, please feel free to contact us at safeguarding@smrt.bristol.sch.uk

Important reminder for all parents and carers: On-line Safety:

While our safeguarding updates cover a range of online safety concerns and government guidance, please could I draw your attention to these sites in particular: Omegle, OwnTV, Thundr and monkey. All of these sites have an on-line gaming focus and use live streamers. These are specifically for over 18 users and are known to be places where older males have groomed and abused young people in the past. We would like you to check what platforms and sites your young people have been using and report any concerns to CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command).

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/>

This message will be repeated next issue and in our bulletin.

Attached is the Wake-up Wednesday overview of the recent OFCOM Media report and advice about dangers young people may face online.

As always, if you have any immediate concerns about safeguarding issues, students, or the school site, please get in touch via:

safeguarding@smrt.bristol.sch.uk

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about OFCOM MEDIA REPORT 2025

Every year, Ofcom releases its Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, offering fresh insights into how young people are using digital platforms. The 2025 edition highlights key safeguarding concerns as children's engagement with social media, gaming, and live streaming continues to grow. This guide pulls out the top statistics from the report, focussing on the main areas of concern for parents and educators.

ONLINE LIVES

Children are engaging with social media and online content at increasing rates:

37%
3-5s

now have access to social media platforms, however, only a small proportion use it independently of parents.

79%
3-17s

have a social media profile, with 16% including a paid-to-promote post.

66%
3-17s

watch livestreamed videos regularly, with 16% of them streaming their own content.

POST

ONLINE GAMING

Gaming remains popular but raises concerns:

74%

of children say they play with someone they know, with a 32% report playing with strangers.

62%

of parents worry about their children talking to strangers while gaming.

31%

of children who game online chat with people they don't know.

PARENTAL CONCERNS

Parents are increasingly worried about online risks:

70%

fear their child may see age-inappropriate or sexual content.

68%

fear exposure to content that promotes self-harm.

72%

worry about their child distinguishing real from fake information.

61%

worry about exposure to extreme views.

69%

are concerned about online bullying.

SCREEN TIME

Screen time is still a major challenge for parents:

70%

of parents of 13-17s say it's difficult to manage screen time.

33%

of 8-17s think their own screen time is too high.

At 29% vs 24%

boys were more likely than girls to disagree that their screen time is too high.

18

HARMFUL CONTENT & INTERACTIONS

A significant minority of children continue to have negative feelings about social media and messaging apps:

Nearly four in ten 8-17s believe that people are mean or unkind to each other online at or most of the time.

Girls aged 8-17 are more likely than boys to say they have experienced someone being nasty or hurtful to them online (30%).

One third of teenagers agree that it's important that people can say what they want online, even if it offends someone.

ONLINE SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

Positively, the vast majority of children reported learning about online safety at school:

92%

of children aged 8-17 recall at least one lesson on online safety and most report finding them useful.

The top three topics covered are:

63%

How to recognise harmful content.

63%

How to keep personal information safe.

62%

Being kind and respectful online.

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