



## May Safeguarding and well-being updates

As we head into half term, I have found some very useful updates that you may find interesting and will hopefully signpost you to further support, if that is what is needed. There is a lot here, so please reach out to the school if you require any further help or support. I hope you have a restful break and get a chance to spend some time in the sun with family and friends.

Please see attached guides for both of the **Wake Up Wednesday** articles:



A study from the British Psychological Society found that the majority of children (71%) had at least one close friend as early as five years old 🧒🧒😊 These connections can form rather quickly and develop with equal speed. At such a young age, it can be remarkable how suddenly two children can hit it off with one another 🚀

However, it is deeply important that children can recognise both the features of a healthy relationship, as well as the potential signs of a less healthy dynamic 🚫 Our **#WakeUpWednesday** guide offers some top tips on reinforcing the formation of healthy friendships among children and young people.



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Statistics from the Children's Commissioner found that in the 2022/23 academic year, 22.3% of all pupils were persistently absent – a significant increase from 2018/19, when that figure was 10.9%. This lost time can have a notable impact on children's development, learning and overall wellbeing.

The specific reasons for school avoidance are sometimes hard to pin down – and it can be even harder to know how best to help absent children return to education. That's why this week, our Wake up Wednesday guide breaks down some of the causes and effects of school avoidance and provides advice on how you can help young people triumph over this potentially damaging cycle 🧠💣

### The Likee App - Similar to Omegle

With the thankful removal of Omegle from the web, ordered by a court earlier this year, it stands to reason that other services are going to become more popular. The Likee app is one of those.

Whilst rated as 12+ on the app stores, the Ts&Cs require users to be 16+, but there is no age verification in place. Not only that:

- There are no privacy settings, everything is public, but you can private chat.
- Under 18's cannot go live - but you can change your age in your profile.
- There is a 'gifting' feature.

This is one which should definitely be on everyone's radar, you can find further information for staff and parents on Wayne Denner's blog by following this link: [New popular Likee app is similar to Omegle - Wayne Denner](#)

### Nintendo Switch Parental Controls

All tech devices come with parental controls, but they're not always easy to find or understand and they can differ quite significantly from device to device.

The Nintendo Switch, which is a very popular device, has a range of parental controls such as browser access, restricting games based on age, chat settings and more and more.

Internet Matters have a great guide for parents which can be downloaded and sent out or added to your school website. Follow this link for more information: [Nintendo Switch parental controls | Internet Matters](#)

### Talking About Online Harassment and Abuse

Sadly, many children and young people believe that online harassment and abuse are just a part of being online, in other words - normalised. This should never be the case, but it can be difficult to strike up a conversation. Internet Matters have a really good guide for parents which they can use for conversation starters.

You can download the guide: [How to talk about harassment and abuse online | Internet Matters](#)

### Managing Screen Time

With half-term almost upon us some parents will be looking for guidance about helping their children to develop a healthy relationship with technology.

Internet Matters have a series of tips and guides to help with this including setting up parental controls, finding other activities to do, agreeing on boundaries and more. You can view the guidance: [Managing children screen time - Parent advice | Internet Matters](#)

### Facebook and Instagram Under Investigation

Tech companies are under increasing pressure as more and more legislation comes out around the world. The EU's Digital Services Act is a new law and their latest investigation is targeting Facebook and Instagram (Meta) due to it's so-called negative addictive effects, including algorithmically driven content, toxic content and age assurance (under 13's on the platforms).

It will be interesting to see what happens with this one, there have been lots of previous investigations into Meta with little to no outcome so will the EU start to show its teeth? You can read more about the investigation on the BBC website here: [Facebook and Instagram suspected to be 'too addictive' - BBC News](#)

### Quarter of children believe carrying a knife makes them safer.

*The Times*

A new survey has found that a quarter of children think that carrying a knife for protection will make them feel safer on the streets. The Ben Kinsella Trust, the anti- knife crime charity, found that nearly one in ten young people said that they had considered carrying a blade, with secondary school children more likely to have carried a knife or know someone who has done so. The survey also found that over a third (36%) of children said that they did not feel safe in the area in which they live. Patrick Green, chief executive of the charity, said: "We need to dig deeper, understand how these influences affect different young people in unique ways. By getting to the root causes, we can dismantle the negative pressures that push young people towards knives."





# SUMMER TIMETABLE

Talks are delivered online via zoom 7pm to 9pm £24 each  
Book online at [facefamilyadvice.co.uk](http://facefamilyadvice.co.uk)

<b>FREE - Supporting Healthy Sleep</b> <b>FREE - Cannabis &amp; Ketamine Awareness</b>	<b>27 JUN</b> <b>30 JUL</b>
Understanding Addictive Behaviour	16 MAY, 11 JUL, 8 AUG
Understanding the Teenage Brain	20 MAY, 15 JUL
Raising Self-Esteem	21 MAY, 16 JUL
Supporting a Child with ADHD	23 MAY, 20 JUN, 18 JUL, 15 AUG
Anxiety Explained	30 MAY, 25 JUL, 22 AUG
Understanding Anger	3 JUN, 29 JUL, 26 AUG
Introduction to OCD	11 JUN, 6 AUG
Improving Family Communication	17 JUN, 12 AUG
Autism: Improving Communication	8 JUL, 5 AUG
What is ACT?	9 JUL
Decreasing Depression	23 JUL
Supporting Healthy Sleep	20 AUG
Today's Teens & Drugs	27 AUG

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## New report reveals alarming lack of sex education among UK girls

[The i](#)

Almost half of girls in the UK leave school without knowing about safe sex and healthy relationships, according to a new report by Plan International UK. The survey of nearly 3,000 girls aged 12 to 21 found that 44% felt they had not been taught vital information about healthy sex and relationships. The report also revealed that 17% of girls felt that boys and men were taught what they need to know about healthy relationships and sex. Additionally, 9% of girls could imagine a situation where it would be acceptable for a boy or man to hit them. Kathleen Spencer Chapman, director of communications, advocacy and UK programmes at Plan International UK, said young people need "proper lesson time allocated for RSHE with trained, specialist teachers". She said: "Introducing strict age-restricted content on the curriculum risks undermining teachers' confidence in delivering RSHE."

## Children to be taught to 'ration' time online

[The Times](#) [The Guardian](#) [The Independent](#)

Under new relationships and sex education (RSE) guidance, children will be taught to "ration" their time online and be warned that pornography teaches distorted attitudes to sex. The guidance will set minimum ages for the first time on lessons about pornography and sexual acts and also warns schools in England not to teach contested gender theories. Teachers will be advised on how to tackle misogynistic online influencers such as Andrew Tate, and address sexual harassment and violence, including stalking. Rishi Sunak has vowed to protect children from "disturbing content that is inappropriate for their age" in the classroom and claimed the guidance would protect them by supporting teachers to teach topics sensitively. However, Pepe Di'lasio, general secretary of the ASCL, said there needed to be some flexibility in the age limits. Paul Whiteman, of the National Association of Head Teachers, said: "Some children and young people are already accessing information from different sources outside school. This may even risk them seeking information from less reliable sources." General secretary Daniel Kebede said pupils need the opportunity to discuss puberty and relationships with trusted adults.

## Head urges parents to ban phones from daughters' bedrooms

[London Evening Standard](#)

Cathy Elliott, headteacher of Streatham and Clapham High School, has urged parents to only buy phones for their children when "absolutely necessary" and then to opt for "brick" phones instead of smartphones, to protect their mental health and prevent addiction. Ms Elliott said schools have a duty both to speak to parents about controlling their children's smartphone use, and to teach them about the online world. She added: "Schools play a vital role in fostering tech-savvy awareness before parents grant access to smartphones... Parents need to understand that smartphones are not equivalent to private spaces, and they should monitor their child's usage to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Just as parents are vigilant about their child's activities in the physical world, they must extend this vigilance to the digital world."

## Teenagers who spend hours on social media three times more likely to vape

[The Daily Telegraph](#) [The Times](#)

A new study from Imperial College London has found that teenagers who spend hours scrolling TikTok or Instagram each day are three times more likely to vape. Dr Anthony Laverty, from the Imperial College London School of Public Health, the lead author, said this was partly explained by the marketing and promotion of vapes online. The study, which was funded by Cancer Research UK, found that social media platforms should take action to ban posts promoting vaping and smoking among children. Researchers said: "In general, we think that algorithms should not be promoting products to individuals that they cannot legally buy. Legislation and enforcement around this and other corporate determinants of health concerns should be considered a core part of online safety and child protection."

## Social media diagnosis tools causing 'mental health overdose' for teens

[The Sunday Telegraph](#)

James Dahl, master of Wellington College, has warned that the Instagram generation are confusing normal stress and anxiety for mental health conditions because increased awareness has led to "over interpretation" and "over pathologisation". Dahl claimed that online diagnosis tools on social media sites like Instagram are convincing many children they have an issue when they are just experiencing "the normal undulations of the teenage life cycle". Dahl believes social media as well as "armchair diagnoses" by the unqualified are leading to "normal transient forms of teenage upset and distress being interpreted as significant mental health issues".

### County lines gangs are using social media to target, groom, and exploit children.

Read the LikesToLines campaign empowers parents and professionals to keep them safe.

[https://www.unseenuk.org/likes-to-lines-county-lines-online-exploitation/?utm\\_source](https://www.unseenuk.org/likes-to-lines-county-lines-online-exploitation/?utm_source)



Rebecca\* thought she was making a new friend online  
But it was a trap.  
Protect your child from county lines online exploitation.

#LIKESTOLINES

unseen



Who's controlling your friends?  
New friends? New stuff? New job?  
New problems?

SeeTheSigns.org.uk  
Tell us anonymously

ESSEX POLICE

## Get Moving - Mental Health Foundation

Mental health for children and young people is vital to their wellbeing and performance in education. The question that has been on people's lips for the past decade or so, has been how can we secure that area of their well being. One of those ways, is to get them moving and engaging in sports and physical endeavours. The connection between exercise and mental health, has long been established. After all, humans were never supposed to be as sedentary as we are today. For children and young people, with bags of potential energy this is even more true. The Mental Health Foundation, in honour of last weeks 'Mental Health Awareness' celebrations has published data on this connection. To find out more, please follow the link below:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/public-engagement/mental-health-awareness-week>

## Online grooming cases soar: 34,000 recorded in six years

[Daily Telegraph](#)

Almost 34,000 cases of online grooming have been recorded in the past six years, with campaigners warning that the true figure is much higher. The National Society for Child Protection states that the sheer volume of cases means that many perpetrators are never caught or charged. The number of online grooming cases has increased by 82% in the past six years, with over 5,500 offences against primary school children. Additionally, sextortion, where children are targeted for money, is also on the rise. Criminal gangs from west Africa and southeast Asia use fake profiles to trick children into sending explicit photos or videos, leading to devastating consequences. Charity Internet Matters has warned that legislation alone is not a solution and that parents must remain vigilant in protecting their children online.

## Vape-spiking pose new threat to schoolchildren

[The I](#)

Vape-spiking cases in the UK are a "new threat", with schoolchildren among those falling victim to the offence, according to the *I*. Police warned they are increasingly concerned after officers found devices containing substances such as THC, the main active ingredient in cannabis, and spice, a powerful synthetic drug. The Met's chief licensing officer, Ian Graham, said Scotland Yard is "aware of vapes being used at school and of young people being spiked there". One headteacher said pupils had fallen seriously ill after using spiked vapes. A report from Action on Smoking and Health found that almost half (47%) of the young people surveyed said their main source of procuring vapes was other people, rather than purchasing the devices.

## **One in seven children experience abuse from sharing naked photos online**

[Mirror.co.uk](https://www.mirror.co.uk)

One in seven children under 16 have experienced abuse from sharing naked photos online, according to research. The lack of education in schools has allowed the problem to spiral out of control, with children as young as 11 sharing explicit images of themselves. Internet Matters, an online safety research group, is calling for primary schools to teach children about the dangers of sending nude photos. The National Crime Agency has warned schools about a rise in financially motivated sexual extortion targeting children, with male victims aged 14-18 being particularly affected. Internet Matters CEO Carolyn Bunting emphasised the need for a stronger system of prevention. The draft Children's Safety Codes of Practice published by Ofcom sets out measures for tech giants to minimise children's exposure to harmful content.

## **Junk food ads on streaming platforms targeting children**

[Daily Telegraph](https://www.telegraph.co.uk)

Children watching video games on streaming platforms are being exposed to junk food marketing for 52 minutes in every hour, according to a British study. The research found that seven in ten of the products being promoted contained unhealthy amounts of sugar, salt, or fat, successfully convincing children to consume more. The study also warned that the sites were likely to be fuelling Britain's obesity epidemic, with four in ten teenagers now obese by the age of 15. Young gamers were found to consume more calories after exposure to the games, which were streamed via platforms like Twitch. Health experts have called for greater regulation of the sector to protect children from aggressive marketing of unhealthy food.

## **Children who use smartphones at mealtimes more likely to be obese**

[The Times](https://www.thetimes.co.uk)

Letting children use screens during mealtimes or eat in front of the TV can increase their risk of becoming overweight or obese, according to a study presented at the European Congress on Obesity. The research found that children who regularly used screens during breakfast, lunch, or dinner were 15% more likely to be overweight. The distraction of screens prevents children from realising when they are full, leading them to continue eating. Experts recommend that parents create phone-free spaces at dinner tables and avoid having meals in front of the television to promote mindful eating habits. The study involved 735 children aged six to ten, and the findings remained significant even after adjusting for other factors.



# 10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

## ENCOURAGING HEALTHY FRIENDSHIPS

Navigating the complexities of childhood and adolescent friendships can be challenging – but with the right guidance, children and young people can cultivate meaningful, supportive relationships, some of which may last for many years. These top tips provide a comprehensive approach to fostering healthy friendships among children and young people. It's important to remember, however, that each child is different, and will require an individual approach to relationship support.

### 1 GRANT FRIENDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Encouraging children and young people to join extracurricular activities can foster healthy friendships by providing shared interests and common ground. Engaging in these pastimes offers a platform for interaction, sometimes alleviating the social pressure of knowing what to say, and helps children develop meaningful connections.

### 2 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

The children and young people in our lives see how we behave, the connections that we've made and the interactions between us and others. When we model healthy friendships, we set an example and help youngsters to understand what healthy friendships looks like and how to navigate them.

### 3 HELP THEM LOVE THEMSELVES

Healthy friendships aren't just about dynamics with other people. They're about our relationship with ourselves. For overall wellbeing, it's important for a child to have the space to build their self-esteem and a positive self-image, as these factors can have a notable influence on the friendships they form throughout life.

### 4 MONITOR SCREEN TIME

Too much screen time can affect some children's wellbeing in general, but it can specifically impact friendships if it results in fewer positive social interactions. In some cases, reducing screen time and encouraging children and young people to find ways to interact face-to-face can have positive results. It's also important to remember that young people can make positive friendships online, but they will require support to do this safely.

### 5 TEACH PROBLEM-SOLVING

Inevitably, friendships can run into problems. However, this is also an opportunity to support children and young people to work through any difficulties that may arise. It can be tempting to intervene and try to fix these issues for those involved, but helping them consider ways of resolving conflict or managing difficult situations for themselves can help them create stronger friendships.

### 6 EMPOWER THE CHILD

When we give children and young people the confidence to choose their friends, navigate interpersonal boundaries and consider how they want to interact with the different people around them, we empower them to take control of the friendships they have. When young people feel in control of these things, they're more likely to make positive choices and remain aware of the signs of a negative relationship.

### 7 TEACH EMPATHY

'Healthy friendships' doesn't always mean 'perfect.' Sometimes, disagreements can happen. When we teach children and young people to have empathy, we help them to see both sides of a relationship; to be mindful of the challenges a friend might be facing or whatever else might be going on. This can help children and young people to build stronger friendships.

### 8 BE OPEN TO QUESTIONS

Talking to young people about their friendships, who they spend time with and who they interact with can open the door to questions if they have concerns. Initially, these queries may be straightforward, but if we are receptive to discussion from the outset, young people are more likely to come to us for help when they are older as well.

### 9 UNDERSTAND BOUNDARIES

One of the keys to a healthy friendship is honouring boundaries. This can include anything from respecting personal space and belongings to acceptable language and behaviour. Understanding the importance of setting these limits and upholding those set by others can help children stay safe. If young people figure out their boundaries and feel comfortable enforcing them, they're more likely to call someone out if they go too far.

### 10 SPOT THE SIGNS

We can't always supervise young people: sometimes, we need to step back and give them some space. However, it's important to consider any indicators that they may be struggling in their friendships. Are they becoming increasingly irritable? Does their behaviour alter when they've been with their friends? Are they becoming withdrawn or reluctant to take part in certain activities? These could all be signs that they're finding things difficult, and we should remain alert to such changes.

### Meet Our Expert

Becky Dawson is an experienced educator who has worked in primary and secondary schools for 20 years. She is a facilitator, consultant and coach working with young people and the adults who work with them, with a focus on developing understanding and skills around mental health, wellbeing and safeguarding.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College



# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

Emotionally Based School Avoidance is a term used to refer to reduced attendance or non-attendance at school by a child or young person. It's often rooted in emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues. The rate of children who miss school more than 10% of the time in England has more than doubled since before the pandemic: rising from 10.9% in 2018-19, to 22.3% in 2022-23.

## UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

### REASONS FOR ABSENCE

School avoidance is sometimes underpinned by several factors rather than one single cause. This could include something going on for the child or young person within the family or at school. A child may have caring responsibilities at home, for instance, or a change in family dynamics; bullying and friendship difficulties at school; pressure to achieve in schoolwork and exams; or moving from primary school to secondary school.

### PATTERNS OF ABSENCE

You may notice patterns in regular absences or children regularly expressing that they don't want to attend school (particularly being reluctant to leave home on school days). If a child or young person is neurodiverse, there is some evidence to suggest there are more aspects of school life which can cause distress – such as changes in the environment, changes of routine and sensory stimuli.

### COMPLAINTS ABOUT PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

There may be an increase in a child or young person's complaints about physical symptoms, particularly on school days or the evening before school. These could include complaining of a tummy ache, headache, or saying they feel ill when there doesn't appear to be a medical cause. Always check with the GP first to rule out medical causes or illness.

## IMPACT OF SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

### LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

School refusal can negatively impact a young person's learning and development. Attending school on a regular basis not only supports academic attainment but is also important for the development of key life skills and the growth of children and young people as citizens.

### LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

The difficulties associated with school non-attendance can be far reaching and may have a negative impact on long-term outcomes. It may, for example, lead to reduced future aspirations, poor emotional regulation, mental health difficulties, limited academic progress and restricted employment opportunities.

### CYCLE OF ABSENCE

Consistent absences may contribute to sustained school avoidance over time. Further to this, the longer a pupil is out of education, the more likely it is that there is a rise in their ongoing need to avoid the activity which is making them anxious – increasing their desire to stay at home.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### WORK TOGETHER

If there's a concern about a child's absence and emotional wellbeing, it's important that there is clear communication and a consistent approach between the child's parents and the school, so you can take a child-centred approach together towards a plan of support or reintegration. This ensures a consistency of approach from both home and school, creating better outcomes for the child.

### MANAGING OVERWHELMING FEELINGS

While there may be times you feel frustrated or angry, try to stay calm; acknowledge the child's worries, listen and discuss a range of coping strategies together to help them face the discomfort and overwhelming feelings. These could include mindfulness, deep breathing or going for a walk and practice the strategies in less overwhelming situations first.

### FOLLOW REGULAR ROUTINES

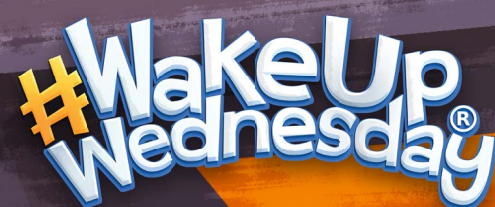
Children can benefit from a regular and consistent routine. This could be a morning routine, from waking up and having breakfast through to getting dressed, packing their bag and leaving the house. A consistent evening routine which is calm and limited time on screens can also give children much needed predictability and familiarity. Schools can help create a timetabled routine for the child's school day, if required.

### REDUCE STIMULATING ACTIVITIES AT HOME

If a child is avoiding school, reduce their access to more stimulating activities (such as watching television, playing games and spending time with friends) during school hours, where possible. This reduces the potential for the child having rewarding experiences at home, which could be interpreted as a positive aspect of avoiding school.

### Meet Our Expert

With 30 years' experience as a teacher, trainer, consultant and interim executive board member, Anna Bateman has a superb understanding of what works in pedagogy, school improvement and leadership. She has also advised the Department for Education on their mental health green paper.



The National College