

news

letter

SPRING 2026



Welcome to our termly newsletter from the safeguarding team at Broadwater School. As we begin our Summer Term we wanted to share so information about safeguarding around AI.

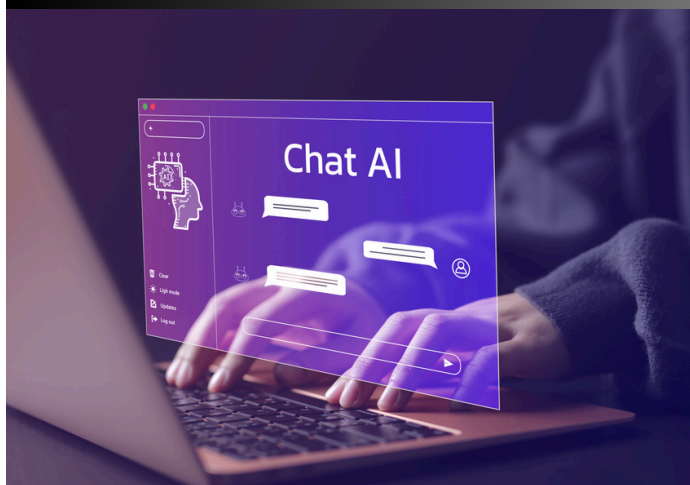
Safeguarding Team

Sophie Smith the Safeguarding Coordinator and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, Jenny Davies our Assistant Headteacher and Safeguarding Lead and Rachel Jones our Early Help Coordinator and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.



Safeguarding Team

As we begin our Summer Term, we would like to highlight the important of safeguarding when using AI. Although is can helpful, it also carries risks such as producing biased or misleading information and generating content that may be inappropriate for young people. Responsible use of AI can ensure that it supports learning safely and ethically .



From Sophie Smith

Gen Z were ruled by the internet whilst Gen Alpha are ruled by algorithms

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now a regular part of young person's lives. While AI offers exciting educational benefits, it also brings new and complex safeguarding risks that we need to be aware of.

During adolescence children are developing their own identities and become curious about the world. It makes sense that they will be drawn into the AI world as it can become a tool to help them explore areas of interest, answer questions that they may not feel comfortable asking face-to-face or offer them companionship that they may find difficult to form in real life.

As adults, we are able to recognise that AI is not a real human and understand the importance of having 'real life' emotional connections. Along with this we can usually identify what is real or fake news due to our brains being matured and simply by having more life experience. Young people cannot always recognise when they are being taken down an "AI rabbit hole" and do not consider that everything they are searching for is creating a new algorithm. It can be so easy to become confused by some of the information that is given or find themselves accessing harmful material.

As with all technology AI seems to develop at an alarming rate. It often feels that it is impossible to keep up with these changes and I am sure that by the time this newsletter is published something new would have been developed however, here is a quick overview of some of the things we need to be aware of and tips for keeping young person's safe.

Why AI Safeguarding Matters

AI tools can sometimes:

- Provide inaccurate, misleading or biased information
- Generate content that is inappropriate for young people
- Encourage over-reliance, reducing critical thinking or independent learning
- Create privacy risks if personal details are shared
- Be used to cheat, plagiarise, or impersonate others

AI "Friendships"

Research highlights growing concerns that some young people form unhealthy emotional bonds with AI chatbots, especially those designed to simulate friendship.

Young people are less likely to question the accuracy of AI responses or recognise the direction that AI responses are taking them in. This increases the risk of manipulation and some young people may become emotionally dependent on AI rather than seeking the correct support from either parents or regulated support organisations.

Privacy Risks & Data Misuse

Young people may unintentionally share personal information through AI targeted marketing, often without understanding the long-term implications.

For example, if a young person frequently watches TikTok and YouTube videos about fitness, body image and healthy eating the AI algorithms would track what they have watched, liked and searched for and will begin to target them with ads for things related such as; weight-loss supplements, protein powders, fitness influencer programmes or meal plans.

This may then lead to click on quizzes or sign-up offers which will ask for personal details (age, email, interests) and the young person may voluntarily offer these details without understanding how that data will be reused.

This type of marketing can exploit vulnerabilities around self-esteem and young people may struggle to recognise advertising versus genuine advice

AI-Generated Deepfakes, Bullying & Sextortion

Artificial intelligence has made it easier than ever to create convincing fake images, videos, or audio, these are often referred to as deepfakes. While some uses are harmless, others are not. Young people may encounter manipulated images of themselves, or others sometimes used to embarrass, bully or blackmail.

Sextortion is another growing concern. This typically involves someone coercing a young person into sharing explicit images, then threatening to distribute them unless demands are met (demands often include money or more images). It can happen quickly and often starts with what seems like a harmless online interaction.

Bullying, of course, isn't new but digital platforms allow it to follow young people everywhere, making it harder to escape.

Exposure to Harmful or Inappropriate Content

AI can expose young people to harmful material. Some AI "friends" may lead young people into inappropriate conversations or offer them unhelpful advice. Young people suffering with low self-esteem may reach out to AI to seek validity for their views on themselves which could be incredibly damaging if AI supports this and offers harmful advice.

An example of this could be a young person asking an AI chatbot for advice on dealing with someone they're upset or angry with. Instead of encouraging calm communication, the AI could generate aggressive or manipulative responses such as suggesting ways to "get back at" someone, spread rumours, or emotionally pressure them.

For a young person still learning how to manage conflict, this kind of guidance can normalise harmful behaviour and contribute to patterns linked with Cyberbullying. Because the advice is delivered in a conversational and seemingly supportive tone, it may feel justified or even helpful in the moment.

This is why it's important to remind young people that AI doesn't understand consequences or relationships in the way people do. Encouraging them to pause, reflect, and seek advice from a trusted adult can help them make healthier choices in difficult situations.

From Sophie Smith

Tips to Keeping Young People 'Cyber' Safe

Start with Open Conversations

The most effective protection is communication. Young people are far more likely to seek help if they feel they won't be judged or punished.

Rather than launching into warnings, try asking open-ended questions:

- "Have you heard about deepfake videos?"
- "What do your friends say about people sharing images online?"
- "Do you know what you'd do if someone pressured you for photos?"

These conversations don't need to be one-off lectures. Keeping them ongoing and low-pressure makes a big difference.

Build Digital Awareness

Young people don't need to become experts, but they should understand a few key points:

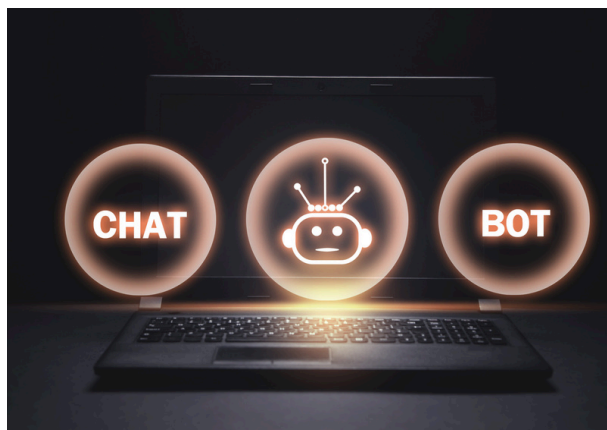
- Not everything online is real—even if it looks convincing
- Once something is shared, control over it can be lost
- Strangers online may not be who they claim to be

Encourage a healthy level of scepticism without making them fearful of everything online.

Set Practical Boundaries Together

Rather than imposing strict rules, involve your young person in setting boundaries:

- What kind of content is okay to share?
- Who is safe to interact with online?
- What should they do if something feels uncomfortable?
- When young people feel ownership over these decisions, they're more likely to follow them.



Watch for Warning Signs

Sometimes young people won't say directly that something is wrong.

Subtle changes can be important clues:

- Sudden withdrawal from friends or activities
- Anxiety around their phone or social media
- Secretive behaviour or reluctance to talk about online interactions
- If you notice these, approach gently. Avoid accusations and focus on support.

Responding to a Problem

If your teenager becomes a victim of bullying, deepfake misuse, or sextortion:

- Stay calm, your reaction sets the tone
- Reassure them they're not alone and help is available
- Avoid blaming them, even if mistakes were made
- Report the issue to the platform and, if necessary, the police.
- You can use the Report Remove tool:



<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/report-remove/>

- Preserve evidence (screenshots, messages)

Quick, supportive action can make a significant difference in outcomes.

Encourage Positive Digital Habits

Help your teen build a healthy relationship with technology:

- Take digital detox breaks from social media
- Follow positive, supportive communities on social media
- Think critically before posting or sharing

Modelling these habits yourself can be surprisingly effective!