SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

Secondary | April 2025

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What is vaping?

Vaping involves inhaling an aerosol (commonly known as vapour) produced by an electronic cigarette or vape device. These devices often contain nicotine, flavourings and other chemicals. Many vapes are marketed with appealing flavours, making them attractive to young people.

Vaping among young people, including those aged 11-16, has become a growing concern. While e-cigarettes were initially designed as an alternative for adult smokers, they have become increasingly popular among teenagers. The appeal of flavoured vapes, the influence of social media and peer pressure all contribute to this rise in use.

The risks of vaping for young people

- **Laced vapes:** some vapes have been found to contain illegal substances such as THC (the psychoactive component in cannabis) or synthetic drugs. These pose serious health risks, including severe anxiety, hallucinations, and hospitalisation. It is crucial to educate young people about the dangers of accepting vapes from others or purchasing them from unverified sources.
- **Nicotine addiction:** many vapes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and can affect brain development in teenagers.
- **Health concerns:** research suggests vaping may cause respiratory issues and expose users to harmful chemicals.
- **Unknown long-term effects:** vaping is a relatively new trend, and scientists are still studying its long-term impact.
- **Illegal sales to under-18s:** it is illegal to sell vapes to anyone under 18, yet many young people still access them through social media, shops or peers.
- **Peer pressure and social media influence:** vaping is often glamorised online, leading to increased experimentation.

How can parents support their children?

If you need further advice and support, here are some helpful resources:

NHS Vaping Information: www.nhs.uk Action on Smoking and Health (ASH): www.ash.org.uk

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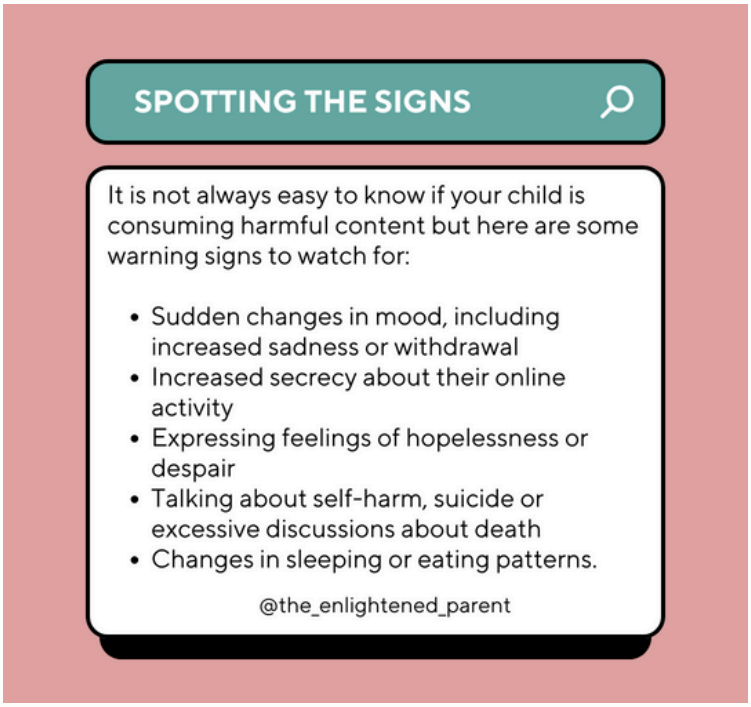
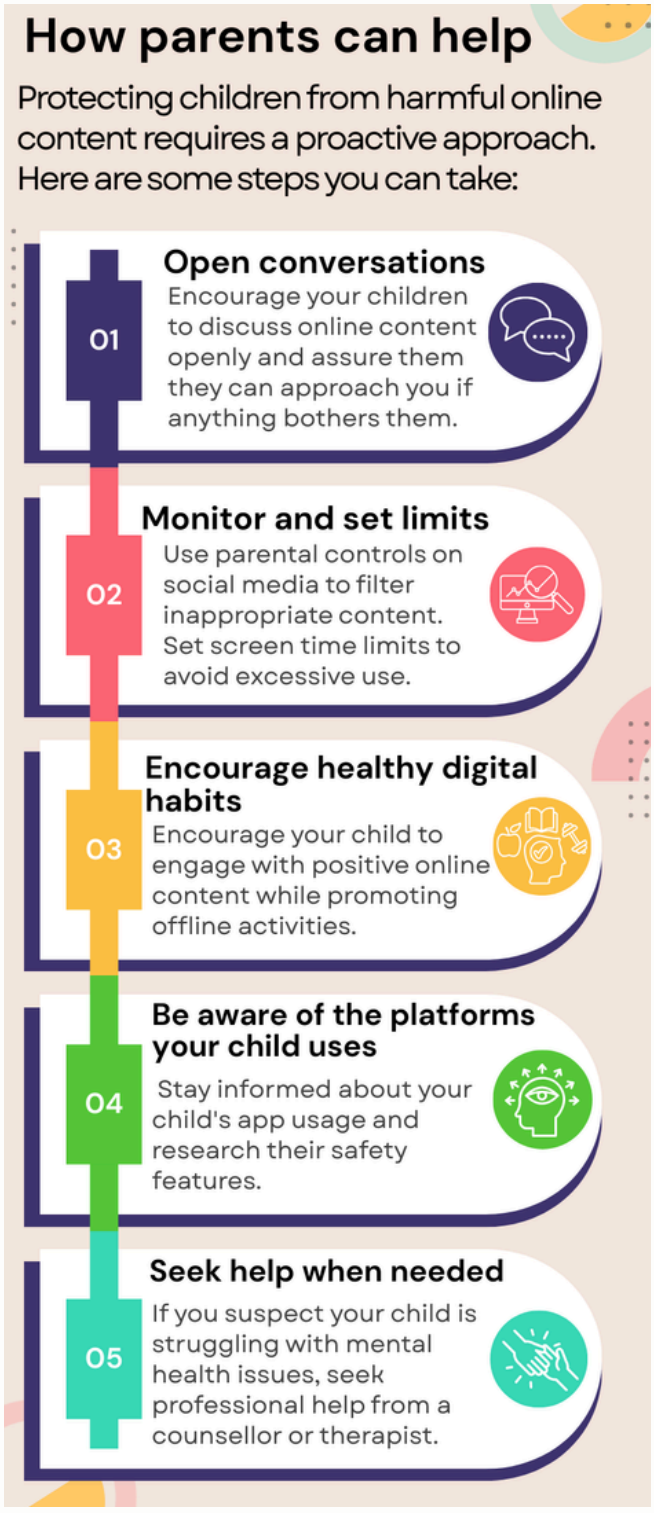
Protecting our children from harmful social media content

In today's digital world, social media platforms play a huge role in shaping our children's lives. While these platforms offer entertainment and social connection, they can also expose young people to disturbing and dangerous content. One of the most alarming trends is the way algorithms push self-harm and suicide-related content to vulnerable users, often without them actively searching for it. As parents, it is crucial to understand these risks and take steps to protect our children.

How social media algorithms work

Social media platforms use complex algorithms to keep users engaged for as long as possible. These algorithms track a user's activity—what they watch, like and interact with—and then recommend similar content. Unfortunately, for children and teenagers who show any interest in mental health topics, this can lead to a harmful cycle where they are repeatedly exposed to content related to self-harm, suicide and other distressing themes. Research has shown that prolonged exposure to such content can increase anxiety, depression and even suicidal thoughts.





A balanced approach to technology

Social media should be used in a way that promotes well-being rather than harm. By staying informed, setting boundaries and fostering open communication, parents can help their children navigate the digital world safely.

If you have concerns or need additional resources, do not hesitate to reach out to safeguarding or pastoral staff at school.