

HOLYHEAD ONLINE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

OUR SAFEGUARDING TEAM

Autumn Term 2025



Grooming online

Grooming is when somebody seeks to build a relationship with a child to exploit them or cause harm. It is important that we teach our children how to recognise red flags. Childline have lots of useful information on their website, including where to get further support from:

[Grooming and online grooming | Childline](#)

How Children can stay safe online

Children can stay safe online by never sharing personal details or passwords, only trusting reliable websites, and telling a trusted adult if anything makes them uncomfortable. They should also use strong, private passwords, log out of accounts when finished, avoid clicking links or downloading from unknown sources, and be careful about who they interact with online. Open communication with parents about online activities is crucial for building trust and ensuring safety

Online Grooming

Connecting with other people is natural when you're spending time online. It can be easy to meet new people, but it's not always as easy to tell when someone is trying to trick or persuade you to do things.

Grooming can happen anywhere you meet people online, including:

- social media and messaging apps
- dating sites
- video and group chat apps
- online game

Remember that the photos, videos and even text someone else sends to you might not always be real, it could have been stolen from someone else or faked using AI tools. Nobody has the right to pressure you or make you feel like you should do something you wouldn't do normally.

Sites where you can meet people online aren't always designed for young people, especially things like dating apps. It can help to think about ways you can stay safe online, and what to do if things you're not expecting happen.

The dangers of online “challenges”

When people share links to online challenges and talk about them a lot online, they can become viral ‘hits’ and it can seem like people you know are really taking part.

This is probably not the case, but if you are worried about a friend you should tell an adult.

Many challenges have been exposed as fake accounts and false stories in the past, even those with ‘origin stories’ where the history of how the game began is told in great detail - and apparent cases of people who have tried out the challenges are often untrue.

Lies are often created about the challenges to make them seem more exciting and dangerous, but that doesn’t stop them resurfacing from time to time.

Being aware of this kind of online behaviour can protect you and your friends.

If you come across a challenge that looks like it will cause harm:

- Never attempt the challenges. Even if you are tempted to try them to prove that they are fake, please don't, because you may hurt yourself
- Don't share the challenge. You could really upset a friend by passing it along, even if you are saying it's fake or silly.
- Use your common sense. Simply being aware of where these internet trends come from, and questioning how likely it is that they are real will help you remember the videos or accounts are just made to scare you
- Tell an adult. Show them what you've seen and explain how it made you feel.
- Block them. Block and report accounts of trolls who post upsetting things or try to friend you and send direct messages. Ignore it and move on. Don't go down a black hole of trying to research and make sense of something that is only designed to upset and confuse you.

A guide for parents

Parents should be aware of online dangers including exposure to harmful or illegal content, cyberbullying, grooming by online predators, and scams, which can impact mental health and wellbeing. Artificial intelligence (AI) also presents new threats, such as negative influence and exposure to harmful content, making it crucial for parents to stay informed about current online trends and apps to protect their children.

What Parents Can Do

Stay informed: Keep up-to-date with current online trends, apps, and the potential risks involved.

Talk to your children: Openly discuss important online safety topics .

Use safety features: Utilize safety features on apps and devices to limit who can contact your child and what content they can access.

Monitor online activity: Be aware of what your children are viewing and posting online to protect their mental health.

What parents and carers need to know about memes

To understand memes, parents should know that they are a form of internet culture used by young people for connection, humor, and interpreting the world. However, meme culture also has risks, including cyberbullying, misinformation, and exposure to inappropriate or harmful content.

How kids engage with memes

- **A new language:** For many young people, memes are a core part of how they communicate. They function as inside jokes, where a shared image or phrase can convey a lot of meaning to those in the know.
- **Coping mechanisms:** Memes can act as a way for children to express and cope with intense emotions, from the everyday stresses of schoolwork to more serious topics like anxiety and mental health.
- **Building identity:** Sharing memes allows kids to build social capital, showcase their wit, and feel a sense of belonging to a digital community.

Potential risks of meme culture

- **Misinformation:** Memes can exaggerate or misrepresent facts for comedic effect, sometimes intentionally, spreading false information rapidly.
- **Cyberbullying and hate speech:** As with any form of humor, memes can be used to mock, demean, or bully others. This can turn hurtful jokes into weapons for cyberbullying.
- **Inappropriate content:** Not all memes are suitable for children. Parents need to be mindful of memes that include inappropriate language, sexual content, or disturbing imagery, which can be easily and accidentally encountered.
- **"Brain rot" and misinformation:** Some recent online trends, including certain memes, have been labeled as "brain rot" by observers. This refers to the rapid, low-effort, and often nonsensical nature of some content that can desensitize kids and make it harder to process more complex information.
- **"Digital footprints":** Sharing memes can become a part of a child's permanent online history. Parents should remind their kids that what they post online can affect their reputation for years to come.

How parents can guide their kids

- **Start with curiosity, not judgment.** Instead of dismissing memes, ask your child to explain why a particular one is funny to them. This shows genuine interest and can lead to deeper conversations about humor, feelings, and the world.
- **Discuss digital citizenship.** Use memes as a starting point to talk about online etiquette and digital literacy. Teach your kids to question where information in a meme comes from and to verify facts from credible sources.
- **Set clear boundaries.** Talk with your children about what kind of content is acceptable within your family's values and what crosses the line into being unkind or inappropriate.
- **Encourage empathy.** Help your children consider how a meme might make another person feel before they share or create it. Discuss what is appropriate to joke about and what is not.
- **Model good behaviour.** Your own actions online can influence your child. Demonstrate healthy habits by putting your phone away during family time and discussing your own feelings about what you see on social media.
- **Create memes together.** Turn it into a bonding activity. Make your own family-friendly memes using family photos, which can help you understand the process and your child's sense of humor.