



## HOLYHEAD SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

January 2026

# OUR SAFEGUARDING TEAM



At Holyhead School we endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We believe that all children should feel safe and be able to approach someone if they have a concern. The safety and wellbeing of our students is the most important aspect of our work as a school. If you have any concerns about your child's wellbeing or safety, or want to report a concern about another child, please ask to speak to one of the Designated Safeguarding Team.

*In this month's issue we look at:*

- Personal safety for young people
- The Hoop Social Media App
- Nudify AI Apps
- How to deal with online scams
- Calm Zone
- Guiding Young Voices to Make a Difference

### Who to contact if you are concerned about a student at Holyhead school:

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Telephone the school on 0121 523 1960 to speak to any of the safeguarding team.

## Personal safety for young people

As the dark nights have drawn in, young people learning how to stay safe in public becomes essential. Independence is an exciting part of growing up, but it also comes with responsibility. Knowing how to plan ahead, stay alert and act confidently can make a big difference in keeping themselves and their friends safe.

How parents and carers can support their child's independence As teenagers begin to explore the world on their own, it's natural for parents and carers to feel both proud and worried. The goal isn't to remove all risk, but to help young people develop the judgement and confidence to handle challenges when they arise.

**Start with trust:** Let your child know you believe in their ability to make good decisions - that trust helps them take safety seriously.

**Talk, don't lecture:** Regular, calm conversations about plans, transport and what to do if something changes are more effective than strict rules.

**Agree on check-ins:** A quick text when they arrive somewhere or when plans change can give peace of mind without feeling like surveillance.

**Teach problem-solving:** Discuss realistic 'what if' scenarios - like a phone running out of battery or being separated from friends - and how to handle them safely.

**Celebrate responsible choices:** Acknowledge when your child shows good judgement or communicates well; it reinforces independence and responsibility.

Growing independence is one of the most rewarding parts of the teenage years - for both young people and their parents and carers. Learning to move confidently through the world, make good decisions and manage risks is a vital step toward adulthood. When teens understand how to stay aware and look out for one another and when parents and carers provide calm, steady support, everyone feels more secure. Personal safety isn't about fear - it's about empowerment, awareness and building the skills that help young people thrive wherever life takes them

**SHARE THESE TIPS WITH YOUR CHILD TO SUPPORT THEIR INDEPENDENCE:**

- 01 PLAN AHEAD**  
Let someone know where you're going, who you're with and when you'll be back. Have a backup plan for getting home safely if your original arrangements change.
- 02 STICK TOGETHER**  
There's safety in numbers. Encourage friends to look out for one another and avoid leaving anyone alone, especially at night or in unfamiliar places.
- 03 STAY AWARE OF SURROUNDINGS**  
Keep headphones off or low and phones out of sight. Trust your instincts - if something feels off, go somewhere safe, like a shop or busy street.
- 04 USE TRANSPORT WISELY**  
Wait for buses or trains in well-lit areas, sit near the driver or other passengers and do not accept lifts from people you don't know well or trust completely.
- 05 KEEP PERSONAL ITEMS SECURE**  
Carry only what you need, keep bags zipped and don't flash valuables in public. Be cautious when using ATMs or sharing location information online.
- 06 KNOW HOW TO GET HELP**  
Save emergency numbers in your phone and know where to find help locally - a trusted adult, shop staff or public transport worker. If you ever feel unsafe, seek help immediately.

## The Hoop Social Media App

The **Hoop social app** is a mobile application that functions as a "friend-finding" service, primarily for teenagers, by linking profiles to **Snapchat** and/or TikTok accounts. It allows users to browse profiles globally using a swipe mechanism similar to dating apps like Tinder.

### How the App Works

Hoop is designed to expand a user's social circle, but all actual communication happens outside the app on platforms like Snapchat.

[Behind the Filters: The risks Snapchat poses to children | The Children's Society](#)

- **Profile Creation:** Users link their Snapchat account and set up a profile with a few pictures, their age, and gender.
- **Connecting:** Users swipe through profiles of others. Tapping the "X" dismisses a profile, while tapping the Snapchat icon sends a request to connect.
- **In-App Currency:** Sending friend requests requires "diamonds," an in-app currency. Diamonds can be earned for free by logging in daily, watching video ads, taking surveys (which collect user data), or inviting friends, or they can be purchased with real money.
- **No In-App Chat:** The Hoop app itself does not have a chat feature. Once a connection is accepted, users move their conversation to Snapchat

## Safety Concerns and Parental Guidance

The Hoop app has raised significant safety concerns among parents and online safety organizations due to its design and target audience.

- **Ineffective Age Verification:** Although the app has a minimum age requirement (typically 13+, with a suggested age of 17+ by some safety experts) and claims to separate teen and adult profiles, there is no robust age verification process. Users can easily lie about their date of birth, allowing adults to potentially connect with minors.
- **Meeting Strangers:** The app's primary purpose is to connect users with strangers, which increases the risk of exposure to individuals with harmful intentions, including online predators and groomers.
- **Exposure to Inappropriate Content:** Despite content moderation efforts, profiles and subsequent communication on Snapchat can expose teens to sexually explicit material, inappropriate language, or solicitations for sites like OnlyFans.
- **Lack of Parental Controls:** Hoop has no built-in parental controls. Parents wishing to manage access must use third-party parental control apps.
- **Privacy Risks:** The app encourages users to share personal information and rewards them for taking surveys, leading to data collection concerns.

[Hoop | eSafety Commissioner](#)

## **Nudify Apps**

Have you heard of Nudify apps? Users upload a picture or video to a Nudify app and AI creates the nude image. This is obviously horrifying. Bark provides further information as well as what to do if this should happen to your child.

Find out more here:

<https://www.bark.us/blog/nudify-ai>

## **Everything Parents Need to Know About Nudify AI Apps**

A new threat students face today is in the form of AI-generated “nudify” apps. Teens are finding out their nudes are being spread around school — even though they never even took them. And it’s all because nudify AI apps are being used to digitally unclothe them.

Our kids face a lot of new challenges that we didn’t have in our childhoods, but this one is particularly novel and worrisome.

The fallout for students who have AI-generated nudes leaked can be devastating. Even though the images aren’t real, they can still hurt their reputation and cause anxiety about who might end up seeing them. When these images are created without someone’s consent (which is almost always the case), it makes the victim feel out of control and objectified. Sadly, students who face this sort of harassment are more likely to struggle with anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

## **How to deal with online scams**

Parent Zone have published an article on how to deal with online scams as well as how to prevent them from happening.

You can read the article here:

[How to deal with online scams: a parent guide | Parent Zone](#)

## **Calm Zone**

Childline have an area on their website full of activities, tools and videos to help you let go of stress. It includes yoga videos, breathing exercises, calming videos and games. It also includes information on how to get further support should you need it.

Find out more here:

[Calm zone | Childline](#)

# GUIDING YOUNG VOICES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Bullying impacts the lives of many young people. In the UK, one in five pupils aged 10 to 15 report being bullied. The effects can be long lasting, affecting mental health, school attendance and self-esteem, and can impact long-term development into adult life. Adults play a key role in building young people's confidence to speak out, support one another, and stand up to unkind behaviour. This guide offers ways to help youngsters make a positive difference.

## 1 CELEBRATE DIFFERENCES



Help young people value diversity by showing that what makes us different is also what makes us strong. Encourage them to learn about different cultures, identities, and abilities through books, films, and conversations. By appreciating uniqueness in themselves and others, children can grow into open-minded individuals who build inclusive and welcoming environments.

## 4 VALIDATE FEELINGS



When a child shares something that worries them, it's important to listen carefully and validate how they feel. Respond with empathy – not judgement – and let them know it's okay to feel upset or confused. Offering reassurance and understanding helps young people feel safe about opening up, and builds the trust needed to talk again in future.

## 7 ENCOURAGE KINDNESS

Everyday acts of kindness can make a big difference in creating safer, happier spaces. Encourage children to look out for one another by being helpful, saying kind words, or including someone who feels left out. These small actions set a strong example that kindness matters, and that it can be a powerful response to bullying.

## 2 MODEL RESPECT



Children watch and learn from how adults behave. Use respectful language, show patience in disagreements, and treat others with fairness – especially in front of children. By modelling inclusive behaviour and challenging unkindness, adults set a lasting example that respect should be part of every interaction, whether online, at school, or at home. Be the change you want to make.

## 5 TEACH ALLYSHIP



Show children how to stand up for others in safe, respectful ways. Allyship might look like sitting next to someone who's been excluded, reporting hurtful behaviour, or speaking up when they witness bullying. By practising these responses together, you're helping children develop the courage to be kind and to take action when it really counts.

## 8 USE YOUR VOICE



Encourage young people to speak up for themselves and others. Whether through storytelling, school campaigns, or peer-led projects, children can learn that their voice has power. Support them to express themselves confidently and safely, helping them understand that sharing experiences can challenge injustice and inspire real change in their communities.

## 10 SUSTAIN THE CONVERSATION



Bullying awareness shouldn't be limited to one week each year. Create regular opportunities to talk about kindness, respect, and inclusion. Use books, news stories, and personal experiences as conversation starters. Embed anti-bullying initiatives into the school, and make tackling bullying a shared, ongoing commitment.

## 3 SPOT THE SIGNS



Adults and young people should learn how to recognise signs that someone may be experiencing bullying. This might include withdrawal from friends, hobbies or interests, changes in mood, reluctance to go to school, or unusual injuries. Helping young people recognise these clues ensures that support can be offered sooner and problems do not go unnoticed.

## 6 PROMOTE REPORTING



Ensure young people know how to report bullying and feel confident that they'll be taken seriously. Talk to them about who they can speak to and what to expect when they do, such as reporting school incidents to teachers, and out-of-school bullying to parents or teachers. Reassure them that reporting is a brave and helpful choice – not tattling – and that it plays a vital role in keeping everyone safe.

## 9 BUILD COMMUNITY AND BELONGING



Children thrive when they feel supported. Help them build strong friendships, join clubs or teams, and connect with trusted adults who care. These networks offer comfort, encouragement, and protection – particularly during challenging times. Remind children that they don't have to face difficulties alone and that support is always within reach.