Witham St Hughs Academy

A L.E.A.D. Academy

Safeguarding Newsletter

Termlet 2

Welcome to Witham St Hughs Academy's Safeguarding Newsletter. Keeping children safe is of course, our key priority here at school. Safeguarding takes many forms including: Protecting children from harm; preventing impairment of children's health and development; enabling safe and effective parenting and giving children equal opportunities in life.

We do many things every day in school to ensure pupils are safe including: ensuring all staff are trained in safeguarding; having clear policies and procedures in place to keep children safe; monitoring pupil attendance; ensuring a safe and healthy site; ensuring the behaviour of pupils is in line with the Academy behaviour policy and using our curriculum to teach children about risk taking, diversity, healthy lifestyles, managing relationships, online safety and much more. Our safeguarding policy is always available to view via our website.

What school will do if we have a safeguarding concern

All school staff receive regular training on a wide variety of safeguarding topics. They know the key areas of abuse to look out for, and the signs that there may be a concern. Equally, children or families will sometimes share a concern directly with a member of staff.

Where a member of staff has a concern, they will speak to the child involved to find out some more information. Staff will never ask a child leading questions or put words into their mouth. Staff will never form a judgement based on what they have been told, but they will simply listen and reassure the child. If a staff member then has a concern about a child, they will report this to one of the 'Designated Safeguarding Leads' (DSL) and/or log this on our safeguarding system.

If we have a concern about your child, and it is safe to do so, a DSL will always call you to discuss this within the same school day. Parents and carers are pivotal to this process, and school will always work alongside parents and carers to ensure the best interest of every child.

Focus on: Bereavement

Around 90% of children will experience a significant bereavement before the age of sixteen years. For some, the death of a parent, carer, sibling or grandparent will happen in the early years of their life. Because young children are very aware of their environment, and the emotions of those around them, it's likely that they will notice if someone is no longer there - or if the adults in their life are grieving. If they are not given information from adults, they may attempt to make sense of the situation on their own.

The website below shares some useful, practical tips for families navigating a loss with their young children:

https://www.annafreud.org/resources/under-fives-wellbeing/common-difficulties/bereavement/

Online Safety

AI Chatbots What is it ?

While online your children frequently encounter artificial intelligence (AI) in various forms. One increasingly common application is the AI chatbot, a computer program designed to simulate conversation with humans. They accesses information from across the internet and use it to generate responses that mimic human conversation. AI has a wide range of uses from providing information, engaging in conversations or assisting with problem solving. It's a powerful tool that offers exciting possibilities for children and young people, but like any tool, it also comes with potential dangers.

Examples of Chatbots;

Chat GBT
Generates human-like responses to text-based conversations

Replika
An AI companion that is paired with a 3D avatar

My AI
My AI is a chatbot available on Snapchat

HiAi
HiAi allows users to create a character to talk to

AI Friends
Has pre set fictional characters for user to chat with

WOMBO
An app that makes pictures based on text prompts

The dangers;

Harmful and inappropriate content:

While AI Chatbots may seem intelligent they are not able to determine what information is good or bad. This can often result in responses that may be harmful or inappropriate for young people. Some apps try to get around this by creating rules and filters for the chatbots to follow . However, whilst investigating this issue we found that most available ai chat apps would jump to sexualised, toxic and abusive conversations with little input from the user, making them inappropriate for the given age rating.

Misinformation and manipulation:

AI can be used to create deepfakes (a video of a person in which their face or body has been digitally altered) and generate realistic but fabricated content. Children may struggle to discern real from fake information, making them vulnerable to online manipulation and propaganda.

The dangers continued;

Connections and wellbeing:

AI Chatbots are designed to be a virtual friend, users can create fictional characters or create a persona from scratch. It is important to understand why children are seeking friendship in this way and if there is a need to seek further wellbeing support. We found that some of the AI apps merge AI and live chats in a way that was not overly clear. Making it possible for strangers to contact children undetected. It is essential to check for these features before giving children or young people access to these apps.

Privacy and data collection:

Many AI apps collect your personal data, including children's online activity and interactions. This data can be used for target advertising, profiling, or even sold to third parties. AI should be treated as though it is a stranger, never sharing private and personal information. Be careful of adverts whilst most AI Chat apps are free to download these include popup adverts. We found that these adverts were often for live chat apps that were not age appropriate for the rating they were given.

5 tip for safe usage;

1. **Know your tools:** Research the chatbot and test it out before letting your child use it, understanding its features, age appropriateness, and potential risks. Check to see what parental features they have. Remember may on the chatbots we used were inappropriate so it's important to explore first.
2. **Open communication:** Talk openly about the risks, encouraging your child to share their experiences and ask questions about things that feel uncomfortable. Try to avoid judgment or dismissiveness that could put them off sharing.
3. **Set boundaries**: Establish time limits and nonprivate spaces in the house for chatbot use, prioritizing real-world interactions and offline activities.
4. **Fact-check together:** Teach your child critical thinking skills, encouraging them to double-check information shared by the chatbot through reliable sources.
5. **Be the guide:** Explore chatbots together, demonstrating responsible online behaviour and showing how to interact respectfully and safely.

Remember Ai isn't all bad, however it is a new technology that requires adult supervision whilst the safety features catch up. AI even helped write some of this newsletter.

To learn more about AI and all parents need to know, visit InternetMatters.org. A full range of step by step parental controls guides are also available.

For advise and support on young people's mental health and wellbeing check out Healthy Minds Lincolnshire for self help guides. You can also call the Here4You Line on 0800 234 6342 to speak directly to one of the practitioners who will talk through how you are feeling.

Our Website

Our Academy website has a host of information regarding safeguarding, our DSL's and safeguarding practices within school.
Importantly, it also has a variety of really useful resources for parents and carers. These include resources from NSPCC, Healthy Minds and Childline to name a few. Parents and carers will also find many links to online safety resources including the 'National Online Safety' posters which share some really helpful guidance on setting parental controls across a whole host of different apps, websites and devices.

https://withamsthughsacademy.co.uk/safeguarding/

Who can help?

Every school has a ‘Designated Safeguarding Lead’. At Witham St Hughs Academy, these are: Emily Broadley, Hannah Younger and Michelle Dexter. Our safeguarding governor is Miles Crawshaw. If you have any concerns in relation to safeguarding, please feel free to speak to a safeguarding lead at any time.

Useful Numbers

Social Services: 01522 782111
ChildLine: 0800 1111
Lincolnshire Prevent Team: 020 7340 7264
Young Carers Helpline: 01522 553275
NSPCC whistle blowing helpline: 08088 005000
FGM helpline: 08000 283550
Samaritans: 01522 528282

Who to contact?

Remember that we are always here to support you and Michelle Dexter our DSL and SENDCo, contacts many parents regularly to make sure everything is going well. Her email address is: michelle.dexter@withamsthughsacademy.co.uk

If you think that you need further support then do not hesitate to contact the school on: 01522 869590 or admin@withamsthughsacademy.co.uk

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