

WELCOME



As we approach the final stretch of the academic year, we continue to place great importance on the wellbeing and safety of our students—both in the physical and digital worlds. While the summer term brings with it excitement, transitions, and new opportunities, it is also a time when many young people are spending more time online—whether through social media, group chats, or gaming platforms.

This term, our online safety focus is an important one: cyberbullying, the impact of unkind behaviour online, and how our online actions can shape our futures. In a world where much of our social life happens on screens, it's more vital than ever to help young people understand that the things they post—whether kind or cruel, supportive or spiteful—don't disappear when the screen is turned off.

Too often, young people feel that the digital world is separate from “real life”. However, we are seeing more and more examples where a single post, comment, or photo has long-lasting consequences. Employers, universities, and even apprenticeship providers now routinely check applicants' online presence. An impulsive remark or a shared image might seem minor in the moment, but it can affect someone's reputation and opportunities for years to come.

We want to empower our students to be thoughtful, respectful, and kind in their digital world. Just as we expect good behaviour in school corridors or classrooms, we must also expect the same respect and responsibility online.

Kind regards,

Mr J Crosthwaite

Associate SLT

Teacher of Computer Science



IN THIS EDITION WE EXPLORE:

- Digital Footprints
- Cyberbullying
- Current online safety trends
- Online Bullying
- Resources for parents/ carers
- Help and support

DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

IT LASTS LONGER THAN YOU THINK

Think Before You Share



Every photo, comment, or post shared online becomes part of your **digital footprint**. This digital trail, whether positive or negative, can often be accessed by others, sometimes years into the future. Even content that's deleted or set to private may have already been saved, or screenshot by others.

Employers, universities, colleges, and apprenticeship providers increasingly look at applicants online presence. They use social media, and search engines to learn more about who someone is beyond a personal statement or CV. And while a good online reputation can open doors, a negative one can just as easily close them.

Being mindful of the digital footprint we leave behind helps ensure that the version of ourselves that others see is the one we are proud of.

Did you know?

Many employers and universities now check applicants' social media before offering a place or job. A single unkind comment, an offensive meme, or a post made in poor judgment—even years ago—can be enough to raise red flags and change the course of someone's future.

It's never too early to think about your **online reputation**. The way you behave online today can shape the opportunities available to you tomorrow. Colleges and employers look not just for qualifications, but also for signs of **maturity, responsibility, and character**. A respectful, kind, and positive online presence tells them that you are someone who can be trusted and valued in their organisation.

Tips for Students:

- Pause before you post: "Would I want a teacher, employer, or parent to see this?"
- Avoid sharing anything in anger or frustration
- Be the person who uplifts, not tears down
- Share things you're proud of—your creativity, achievements, and interests.

A FAMILY ONLINE SAFETY CONVERSATION

Ask: "Would you say that face-to-face?" when discussing online messages

Talk about real-life stories of social media affecting job prospects

Encourage your child to review their privacy settings regularly

CYBERBULLYING

MORE THAN JUST UNKINDNESS ONLINE


Recognise It. Stop It. Speak Up.




Cyberbullying is when someone uses technology—like messaging apps, social media platforms, or gaming chats—to deliberately upset, threaten, embarrass, or exclude another person. It's not just 'banter' or 'joking around'—it can cause lasting emotional harm.

Cyberbullying can take many forms:

- Posting or sharing hurtful, threatening, or humiliating messages
- Spreading rumours or lies online
- Excluding someone from group chats or digital activities
- Creating fake accounts to mock or impersonate someone
- Sharing private images or videos without permission

 **Why it matters:** Unlike playground bullying, cyberbullying doesn't end when someone gets home. It can follow them into every part of their life through their phone or device, affecting sleep, self-esteem, and even academic performance. Because online messages can be forwarded, screenshot, and shared, the effects can be far-reaching and long-lasting.

 **The impact:** Cyberbullying often leads to anxiety, isolation, depression, and in extreme cases, self-harm or suicidal thoughts. It not only affects the victim but also changes the tone and safety of the whole online community. Young people who bully others may also face disciplinary actions at school, involvement from law enforcement, and long-term consequences on their reputation and opportunities.

 **What can we do?**

- **Speak up:** If you see something unkind, report it and offer support to the person affected.
- Don't share or like harmful content—even passive participation encourages bullies.
- Use privacy settings to protect yourself and your content.
- Tell a trusted adult or use the school's Safety Hub if something online is making you uncomfortable.

Let's work together to make our online spaces safe, respectful, and inclusive for everyone.



CURRENT ONLINE SAFETY TRENDS

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2025



Know the Risks. Make Smart Choices.

AI-Generated Content & Deepfakes

AI tools can create realistic fake videos, images, and voices. These are sometimes used to spread false information or impersonate others. Be wary and verify what you see online and question, "Is this real?", is it "Too good to be true?".

Anonymous Messaging Apps

There are platforms that allow anonymous messages—which can easily become catalysts for bullying and harassment. Be cautious of platforms where people can hide behind anonymity.

Gaming Chat & Toxicity

In-game chatrooms, particularly in competitive games, are increasingly filled with harmful language and threats. Know how to mute, block, or report users. Encourage respect in gaming as in real life.

Scams on Social Media

Scammers now use TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat to trick users into crypto schemes or fake giveaways. If something looks too good to be true, it usually is. Never share personal or financial details.

Digital Consent

Sharing photos or stories of young people without their permission can damage trust and impact yours and their digital footprint.

Viral Challenges

Seemingly, harmless challenges can encourage risky, harmful, or even illegal actions. Before joining a trend, you should ask yourself: "Is this safe? Is this respectful? Could this hurt someone or get me into trouble?".

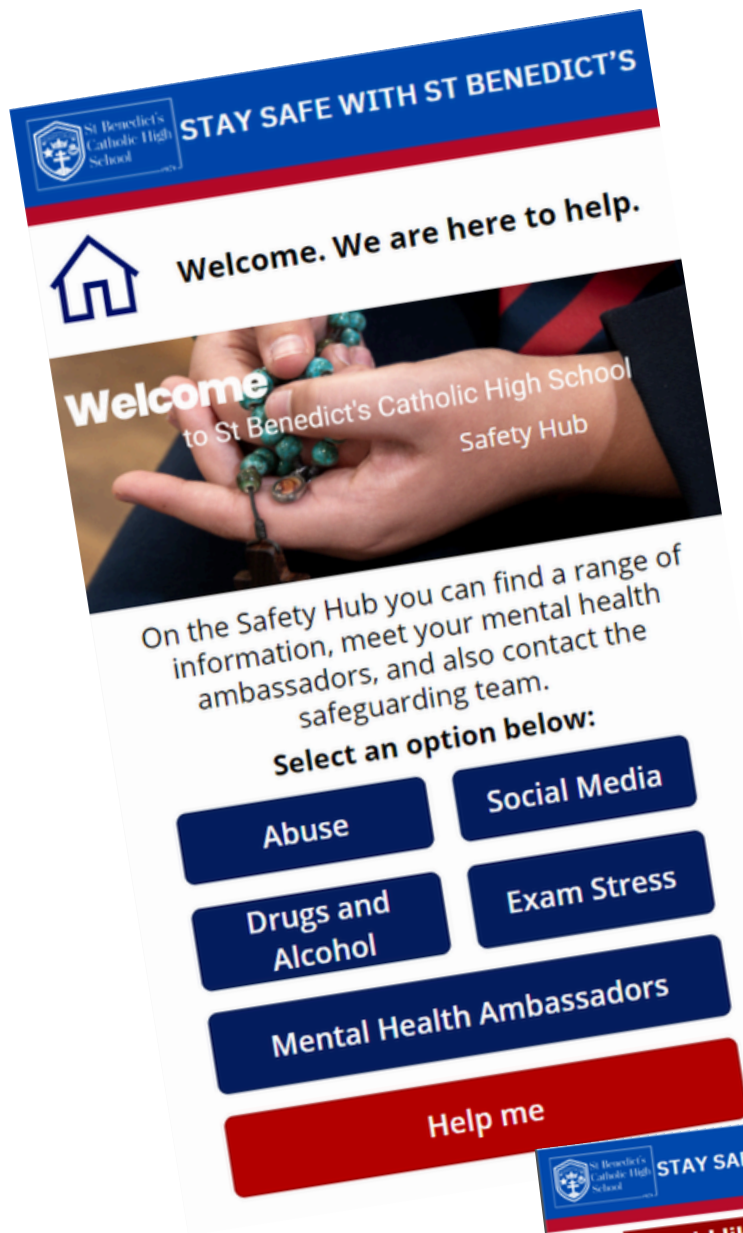
CEOP is a law enforcement agency and is here to keep children and young people safe from sexual exploitation and abuse.

CEOP.police.uk



REPORT IT. DON'T TOLERATE IT.

ONLINE BULLYING



Last year, we launched our **Safety Hub** app. The app (available within Microsoft Teams) is available for all pupils in the school. Currently, we have sections in the app that cover advice and guidance on:

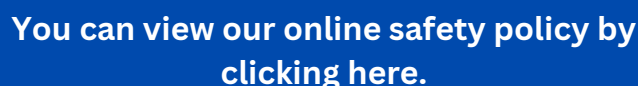
- Mental Health
- Abuse
- Social Media
- Drugs and Alcohol (including smoking and vaping)
- Exam Stress
- and a 'Help Me' section.

HELP ME

Pupils can use this to ask for help with any safeguarding issue including bullying. If a pupil doesn't feel they can speak to a member of staff in person they can use this app and the message will then be sent to a member of the safeguarding team who will work to resolve the issue with the pupil.



» NEXT



HELP AND SUPPORT

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS/CARERS



Dear Parents & Carers,

The online world is posing an ever-increasing risk to children, and it is important that schools, parents, and carers work together to take an active role in teaching children about online dangers. Learning how to act safely when using the internet is an incredibly important part of safeguarding our children.

I am pleased to make you aware that we have partnered with a company called National Online Safety, who provide resources for parents and carers on all aspects of online safety.

The resources include online video resources and weekly guides covering a range of topics, including:

- Online Relationships
- Fake Profiles & Social Bots
- Online Bullying
- Online Grooming
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Sexual Harassment & Violence
- Sexting
- Live Streaming
- Online Identity
- Screen Addiction
- Online Challenges
- Overspending
- Social Media Platforms
- Online Gambling
- Radicalisation, Terrorism & Extremism
- Age Inappropriate Content
- Copyright & Ownership
- Hacking
- Fake News
- Online Fraud
- Online Reputation
- Personal Data
- Pornography
- Targeted Adverts & Pop-Ups
- The Dark Web
- Games & Trends

To create your account, please follow <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/enrol/st-benedict-s-catholic-high-school> and complete your details.

Alternatively, you can scan this QR code using your phones camera to go straight to the site:



When you are set up, you will be able to set 'Parent/Carer' as your user type.

You can access National Online Safety online via any device- including a smartphone app. To download the app, please go to:

Apple devices: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/national-online-safety/id1530342372>

Android devices: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.nationaleducationgroup.nos>

Alternatively, search for 'National Online Safety' in the App Store/Google Play Store.

J. Crosthwaite, Associate SLT