

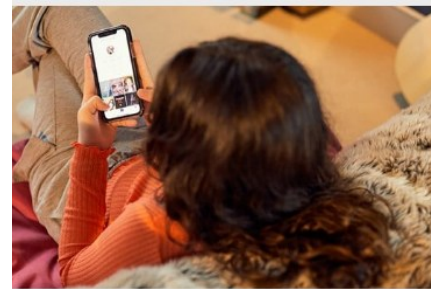
# Alcester Academy



## Online Safety Bulletin—Autumn 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

In today's digital world, it's more important than ever to ensure our children are safe online. As your child navigates their teenage years, they'll likely be exploring various apps and social media platforms. This bulletin provides essential information on parental controls, reliable online resources, and how to report any concerns you may have.



### Understanding Parental Controls for Apps & Social Media

Parental controls are not about spying on your child, but about creating a safer online environment. They can help manage screen time, restrict access to inappropriate content, and control in-app purchases. While no control is foolproof, they are a valuable tool in your e-safety toolkit.

Here's a general guide to what you can typically find and look for:

**Platform-Specific Settings:** Most popular apps and social media platforms have their own built-in parental control or privacy settings. These are often found within the app's settings menu, under sections like *Privacy*, *Security*, *Content Preferences*, or *Family Settings*.

#### Examples to explore:

- **TikTok:** Family Pairing features allow parents to link their accounts to their child's, enabling controls over screen time, direct messages, and content restrictions.
- **Instagram:** Offers tools for parents to set daily limits, schedule breaks, and see who their teen follows and is followed by.
- **Snapchat:** While traditionally more private, Snapchat has introduced features like Family Centre, allowing parents some visibility into who their teen is talking to (without revealing message content).
- **YouTube:** YouTube Kids is a filtered version, but for older teens, consider Restricted Mode on the main YouTube app to filter out potentially mature content.
- **Gaming Platforms (e.g., PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo Switch):** These consoles have extensive parental controls for managing screen time, age-restricted game access, communication with other players, and spending limits.

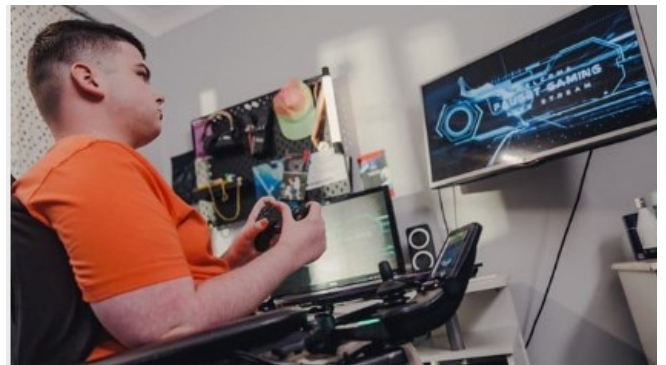
### Operating System Level Controls (iOS & Android):

- **Apple (iOS - Screen Time):** Built into iPhones and iPads, Screen Time allows you to set downtime, app limits, content and privacy restrictions (including explicit content, web content filters, and in-app purchases), and communication limits. You can also review your child's activity.
- **Google (Android - Family Link):** Google Family Link allows you to create a Google Account for your child, manage their app downloads, track app activity, set screen time limits, lock their device, and see their device's location.
- **Broadband Provider Controls:** Many UK broadband providers (e.g., BT, Sky, Virgin Media, TalkTalk) offer parental controls at the router level. These can filter content across all devices connected to your home Wi-Fi, providing a broader layer of protection. Check your provider's website or your online account for details on how to activate these.

### Key Actions for Parents

#### Open and Ongoing Communication: The Foundation of Online Safety

- **Foster a Safe Space:** Create an environment where your child feels comfortable coming to you with any online worries, big or small, without fear of judgment or having their devices immediately confiscated. Reassure them that you're there to help, not to punish.
- **Regular Conversations:** Don't just talk about online safety once. Make it an ongoing dialogue. Ask open-ended questions like, "What cool things are you seeing online today?" or "Has anything made you feel uncomfortable online recently?"
- **Stay Curious, Not Critical:** Show genuine interest in the apps and games your child uses. Ask them to show you how they work and explain why they like them. This gives you insight and builds trust.
- **Discuss Consequences:** Talk about the potential consequences of sharing too much information, interacting with strangers, or engaging in cyberbullying, both for themselves and others.



‘Balanced Life: Show your child the importance of balancing online activities with offline pursuits like sports, hobbies, reading, and spending time with family and friends in person.’

### Explore Settings Together: A Collaborative Approach to Controls

- **Sit Down Side-by-Side:** Instead of just activating controls, involve your child in the process. Explain why certain settings are being enabled (e.g., "We're putting this in place so you don't accidentally spend money in games," or "This setting helps filter out things that aren't appropriate for your age").
- **Review Regularly:** Digital platforms frequently update their features and privacy settings. Make it a habit to periodically review these settings with your child to ensure they are still appropriate and effective.
- **Understand the "Why":** Help your child understand why these controls are important for their safety and well-being, rather than them seeing it as just a restriction.

### Agree on Clear Family Rules: Setting Expectations

- **Collaborate on Guidelines:** Involve your teen in creating family rules for online behaviour. When they have a say, they're more likely to adhere to them.
- **Define Screen Time:** Discuss and agree upon realistic screen time limits, considering schoolwork, sleep, and other activities. Utilise device-level controls (like Apple's Screen Time or Google's Family Link) to help enforce these agreements.
- **Content Boundaries:** Clearly define what types of content are acceptable and what is not. Discuss the importance of critical thinking when encountering information online.
- **Privacy Rules:** Establish rules about what personal information can and cannot be shared online (e.g., full name, address, school, photos in school uniform).
- **Respectful Interaction:** Emphasise the importance of being kind and respectful online, just as they would be offline. Discuss the impact of cyberbullying and the importance of reporting it.
- **"No Phone Zones":** Consider implementing "no phone zones" or "no phone times" in your home, such as during family meals, an hour before bedtime, or in bedrooms overnight, to encourage digital detox and better sleep.

### Stay Informed and Adapt: The Evolving Digital Landscape

- **Follow Reputable Sources:** Regularly check websites like NSPCC Net Aware, Internet Matters, and Thinkuknow for the latest information on new apps, games, and online trends that might affect your child.
- **Understand New Features:** When a new app becomes popular, take the time to understand its features, particularly its privacy and safety settings, before your child starts using it.
- **Your Child as a Source:** Sometimes, your child might be the first to know about new platforms. Encourage them to share what they learn, fostering an environment where you can learn together.



### Be a Positive Role Model: Leading by Example

- **Mindful Device Use:** Demonstrate responsible device usage yourself. Put your phone away during family time, avoid excessive scrolling, and manage your own screen time.
- **Digital Footprint Awareness:** Show your child how you manage your own online privacy and why it's important to think before you post.
- **Balanced Life:** Show your child the importance of balancing online activities with offline pursuits like sports, hobbies, reading, and spending time with family and friends in person.



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## Possible Online Sources of Information

There are many excellent resources available to help you stay informed and manage your child's online safety:

- **My Child At School App (MCAS):** You can find additional information regarding Android & Apple User Guides in your MCAS App. These are presented as video tutorial files, and are included in the Important Documents section on your MCAS App.
- **NSPCC Net Aware:** ([www.net-aware.org.uk](http://www.net-aware.org.uk)) - Provides comprehensive guides to social media sites, apps, and games, explaining what they are, what risks they pose, and how to activate safety settings.
- **Internet Matters:** ([www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)) - Offers expert advice and resources for parents on a wide range of online safety topics, including cyberbullying, online grooming, and screen time. They have specific guides for different age groups.
- **Thinkuknow (from NCA-CEOP):** ([www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)) - Provides age-appropriate resources for children, parents, and educators on online safety. Their parents' section has excellent advice and real-life stories.
- **Safer Internet Centre (UKSIC):** ([www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)) - A partnership of leading organisations, offering advice, resources, and policy recommendations on online safety. They run Safer Internet Day.
- **Childnet International:** ([www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)) - A non-profit organisation working to make the internet a great and safe place for children. They have resources for parents, carers, and young people.



## How to Report Concerns

If you or your child encounter something concerning online, it's crucial to know how to report it.

- **Report to the Platform:** Most social media platforms and apps have a "report" function for inappropriate content, abusive behaviour, or fake profiles. This is usually the quickest way to get the content reviewed and potentially removed by the platform.
- **NCA-CEOP (National Crime Agency - Child Exploitation and Online Protection):** ([www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre)) - If you are concerned about online sexual abuse or exploitation, or if someone is attempting to groom your child, you should report it directly to CEOP. This is a vital service for serious online safeguarding issues.
- **Police:** In cases of illegal activity, threats of harm, or if you believe your child is in immediate danger, contact your local police force by calling 101 (non-emergency) or 999 (emergency).
- **School:** Please inform the school if your child is experiencing online bullying or if something online is impacting their well-being or learning. We can offer support and guidance.



**By working together, we can help ensure our children have a positive and safe experience in the digital world.**

**If you have any questions or require further support, please do not hesitate to contact the school.**

