FRIDAY 13TH NOVEMBER 2026
ISSUE 9

THE BLUE COAT SCHOOL WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

REMEMBRANCE DAY AT THE BLUE COAT SCHOOL – WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

This week, The Blue Coat School joined people across the country in marking Remembrance Day, taking time to honour those who have lost their lives in conflict and those who have served and continue to serve in our Armed Forces.



Throughout the week, pupils took part in special Remembrance assemblies, reflecting on the courage, sacrifice and service of those who fought to protect the freedoms we enjoy today. The assemblies encouraged pupils to consider the human cost of war, the importance of remembrance and the need for peace, tolerance and understanding in our world today.

On Wednesday 11 November, at 11am, our whole school community came together to observe a two-minute silence. This was a particularly poignant moment, as pupils and staff paused together in quiet reflection to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Students were led in the 2 minute silence, followed by a moving rendition of the Last Post, performed by Year 12 students Amelia and Isaac.

Our Sixth Form students also played an important role in the school's commemorations, selling poppies and raising funds for the Royal British Legion. Their efforts reflected the generosity and sense of service that are so central to our school community.





Remembrance holds particular significance at Blue Coat, where our school motto, Non Sibi Sed Omnibus – Not for Oneself, but for All – reminds us of the importance of service, responsibility and selflessness.

We were proud of the respect and maturity shown by our pupils throughout the commemorations and grateful to everyone who supported the fundraising efforts.

We will remember them.

BLUE COAT CHESS STARS SHINE AT ‘SHE PLAYS TO WIN’ TOURNAMENT!



Congratulations to Katherine G(Year 8, Seacole) and Iris S (Year 7, Roscoe), who achieved fantastic results at the She Plays to Win all-female chess tournament, held at Holly Lodge Girls’ College on Sunday 8 November.

Competing against players from across the region, Katherine secured an impressive second place in the Under-18 category, with Iris finishing third, just half a point behind her.

Both girls were among the youngest competitors in the tournament, making their achievements even more impressive. It was also Iris’s first-ever competitive chess tournament – a remarkable debut!

The girls demonstrated excellent strategic thinking, concentration and determination throughout the competition, competing confidently against much older and more experienced players.

We are incredibly proud of both Katherine and Iris for representing Blue Coat so brilliantly. Their success is a wonderful example of the talent and enthusiasm of our pupils beyond the classroom.

Well done, Katherine and Iris – two chess stars to watch!





ANTI-BULLYING WEEK 2026: CHOOSE RESPECT

This year, Anti-Bullying Week takes place from Monday 16 November to Friday 20 November 2026. Organised by the Anti-Bullying Alliance, the national event brings together schools, young people and communities across the country to promote kindness, inclusion and respect. The theme for 2026 is "Choose Respect", encouraging everyone to consider how their words and actions can positively impact others.

Throughout the week, students at The Blue Coat School took part in assemblies, form-time discussions and activities designed to raise awareness of bullying and reinforce the importance of treating others with dignity and respect. The theme provided an opportunity for students to reflect on how respect can be demonstrated in everyday interactions, both in school and online.

Students explored the different forms bullying can take, including cyberbullying, and discussed practical ways to support those who may be experiencing difficulties. Particular emphasis was placed on being active bystanders, speaking up when something is wrong and ensuring that everyone feels safe, valued and included within our school community.

Anti-Bullying Week also celebrated the positive relationships that exist across the school. By encouraging empathy, kindness and understanding, the week highlighted the important role each individual plays in creating an environment where everyone can thrive and achieve their best.

As a school, we remain committed to fostering a culture of mutual respect and belonging. While Anti-Bullying Week provides a valuable focus each November, its message extends far beyond a single week. By choosing respect every day, we can all help build a stronger, kinder and more inclusive community.

KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE: UNDERSTANDING EXTREMISM, RADICALISATION AND ONLINE INFLUENCES

At The Blue Coat School, we are committed to helping all students stay safe, think critically and develop into respectful, responsible members of society. As part of our safeguarding work, we regularly educate students about the risks associated with extremism, radicalisation, harmful online influences and discriminatory ideologies. We believe that prevention, open conversation and strong partnerships with families are essential in helping young people navigate an increasingly complex online world.

What Do We Mean by Extremism and Radicalisation?

Extremism is the promotion of views or beliefs that seek to undermine fundamental values such as democracy, mutual respect, individual liberty and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.



Radicalisation is the process through which a person may be influenced to support extremist ideas, groups or activities. This can happen gradually and often begins online through social media, gaming platforms, discussion forums, videos or messaging apps.

Young people can be particularly vulnerable during periods of change, uncertainty, loneliness or when they are seeking a sense of belonging and identity. Extremist groups often exploit these feelings by offering friendship, purpose or a community.

Emerging Risks: Misogyny and Incel Culture

One area of growing concern nationally is the rise of online misogyny and "incel" culture.

The term incel (involuntary celibate) describes online communities that promote harmful attitudes towards women and girls. Some websites, influencers and discussion groups encourage young men to blame others for their problems, promote hatred towards women, or justify violence and abuse.

While many young people may encounter these ideas online out of curiosity, repeated exposure can normalise harmful views and affect attitudes towards relationships, equality and respect.

Parents and carers should be aware of warning signs such as:

- Increased use of hateful or discriminatory language.
- Obsessive viewing of extreme online personalities or influencers.
- Withdrawal from established friendship groups.
- Hostility towards girls, women or minority groups.
- Becoming secretive about online activity.
- Expressing "us versus them" viewpoints.
- Sudden changes in beliefs or behaviour.



The Influence of Social Media

Many extremist narratives do not begin with obviously dangerous content. Algorithms can gradually expose young people to increasingly extreme material based on what they watch, like or share.

Students may encounter:

- Conspiracy theories.
- Hate speech.
- Racist, antisemitic or Islamophobic content.
- Misogynistic influencers.
- Extremist political or religious propaganda.
- Harmful online communities that encourage isolation from family and friends.
- We encourage all students to question information critically, check sources carefully and discuss anything that makes them feel uncomfortable with a trusted adult.



Online Safety Tips for Families



You can help keep your child safe online by:

✅ Taking an active interest in what they do online.
✅ Maintaining open, non-judgemental conversations about social media and online experiences.
✅ Encouraging critical thinking and discussion about information they encounter.
✅ Using parental controls and privacy settings where appropriate.
✅ Reminding young people never to share personal information with people they only know online.
✅ Monitoring the platforms, gaming communities and influencers they follow.
✅ Reporting concerning content to the platform and seeking support when required.

Support Available at School

Students should know that they are never alone if they are worried about something they have seen online or if someone is trying to influence them.



At The Blue Coat School, support is available through:

- Form Tutors
- Heads of Year
- Pastoral Leaders
- Safeguarding Team
- School Counsellors and Wellbeing Staff
- Senior Leaders



Students are encouraged to speak to an adult as soon as possible if they:

- See extremist or hateful content online.
- Feel pressured by others to adopt particular beliefs.
- Are worried about a friend.
- Experience online harassment or abuse.
- Encounter threatening or disturbing content.

External Sources of Support

ACT Early
ACT Early is a confidential safeguarding programme that supports families who are concerned about someone being influenced by extremist ideas.
Website: www.actearly.uk

NSPCC
The NSPCC provides advice and support for parents and young people on online safety and protecting children from harm.
Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

Childline
Young people can access free, confidential support 24 hours a day.
Website: www.childline.org.uk
Telephone: 0800 1111

Internet Matters
Provides practical guides and advice for families on social media, gaming and online safety.
Website: www.internetmatters.org

CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
Young people can report online abuse or inappropriate online behaviour through CEOP.
Website: www.ceop.police.uk

A Shared Responsibility

Helping young people stay safe from extremism, radicalisation and harmful online influences is a shared responsibility between school, families and the wider community. By maintaining open communication, promoting critical thinking and encouraging respectful relationships, we can help our young people navigate the online world safely and confidently.

If you have any concerns about your child or another young person, please contact the school's safeguarding team. Early support and conversation can make a significant difference in keeping children safe and helping them thrive.

A FANTASTIC £77,400 BOOST FOR FOOD TECHNOLOGY AT BLUE COAT!



We are absolutely delighted to announce that The Blue Coat School has been awarded a grant of up to £77,400 to refurbish one of our Food Technology classrooms! This is fantastic news and an exciting opportunity to transform our facilities and create an even better learning environment for our pupils.

The Wolfson Foundation

The funding comes from the Wolfson Foundation, an independent charitable organisation established in 1955 that supports excellence in education, science, research and the arts. The Foundation has awarded over £1 billion to projects across the UK, helping schools and other organisations improve their facilities and create outstanding opportunities for young people.

This generous award will allow us to make significant improvements to our Food Technology facilities, providing a modern, inspiring and well-equipped space where pupils can develop their practical skills, creativity and confidence in cooking.

A special thank you must go to Ms Graham, our Food Technology teacher, who played an important role in preparing the successful funding bid. Her hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to improving opportunities for our pupils have helped make this exciting project possible.

We are incredibly grateful to the Wolfson Foundation for its generosity and support. We cannot wait to see the transformation take shape and, most importantly, to see our pupils enjoying the fantastic opportunities it will bring.

We are looking forward to even more brilliant Blue Coat Food Technology lessons, wonderful culinary creations and perhaps a few future master chefs along the way!



READING FOR MEANING: OPENING DOORS TO LEARNING

At Blue Coat, we believe that being a confident reader is about much more than recognising words on a page. It is about understanding complex ideas, questioning information, developing vocabulary and having the confidence to tackle unfamiliar texts independently.



This term, our Reading for Meaning intervention programme is helping to put these important skills at the heart of pupils' learning.

The programme provides carefully structured, personalised support for pupils who would benefit from developing their reading comprehension and fluency. Through a series of 20-minute sessions, pupils explore a rich variety of fiction, non-fiction and journalism, learning how to identify key information, make inferences, understand unfamiliar vocabulary and explain what they have read.

An important feature of the programme is the involvement of our Sixth Form students, who act as reading mentors, providing encouragement and guidance to younger pupils. Working together, they explore texts, ask questions and discuss ideas, helping younger readers to develop the strategies they need to become increasingly independent.

What makes this approach particularly valuable is that the aim is not simply to help pupils answer questions correctly. It is to give them the tools to tackle challenging reading for themselves, gradually reducing the support they need as their confidence develops.

Reading underpins success across the entire curriculum, whether interpreting a historical source, understanding a scientific explanation or analysing a piece of literature. By investing in these essential skills, we are helping ensure that every pupil can access the ambitious and challenging education that Blue Coat provides.

Our ambition is simple: every pupil should develop the confidence, curiosity and skills to become a successful, independent reader, both within school and beyond.

INTER FAITH WEEK 2026

From 8-15 November, communities across the UK will come together to celebrate Inter Faith Week 2026, a national initiative that promotes understanding, respect and cooperation between people of different faiths and beliefs. Beginning on Remembrance Sunday, the week provides an opportunity to reflect on the contributions made by people of all faiths and none, while considering how we can continue to build a more just, peaceful and harmonious society.



Inter Faith Week shines a spotlight on the excellent work carried out by faith communities, interfaith organisations and community groups throughout the year. It encourages people from different backgrounds to learn from one another, develop meaningful relationships and recognise the values that unite us. By bringing communities together, the week helps to strengthen neighbourly connections and celebrate both our diversity and our shared humanity.

The week is built around three key aims: strengthening positive interfaith relationships, increasing awareness of the many faith communities that contribute to life across the UK, and promoting understanding between people with religious and non-religious beliefs. These goals are particularly relevant in schools, where young people learn the importance of respect, dialogue and active citizenship in an increasingly diverse world.

Inter Faith Week is open to everyone and involves a wide range of organisations, including schools, youth groups, places of worship, universities, local authorities, charities, businesses and community organisations. Through discussions, workshops, visits, shared projects and celebrations, participants are encouraged to explore different perspectives and build lasting connections.

At The Blue Coat School, we value opportunities that encourage understanding, respect and inclusion. Inter Faith Week provides a timely reminder of the importance of listening to others, celebrating difference and finding common ground. By learning from one another and working together, we can help create stronger communities both within school and beyond.

MORE THAN NEAT WRITING: BUILDING CONFIDENCE, ONE LETTER AT A TIME



In an increasingly digital world, it can be easy to overlook the importance of handwriting. Yet, for young people, being able to write clearly, comfortably and fluently remains an essential skill that can make a significant difference to their learning.

For some pupils, handwriting can present a real challenge. Ideas may be excellent, understanding may be secure, but the physical process of getting those thoughts onto paper can be slow, tiring or frustrating. At Blue Coat, we are determined that handwriting should never become an unnecessary barrier to achievement.
Our Better Handwriting intervention programme is designed to provide practical, individualised support for pupils who experience these difficulties.

Delivered through a structured 12-week programme, with two short sessions each week, the intervention focuses on the building blocks of effective handwriting. Pupils work on letter formation, pencil control, spacing, writing fluency and stamina, gradually developing greater consistency and independence.
Crucially, the programme is not about producing perfect handwriting or making everyone's writing look the same. It is about helping pupils develop a comfortable, legible and sustainable handwriting style that allows them to communicate their ideas effectively.

The approach recognises that pupils have different needs. Some may struggle with the speed of writing, others with letter formation or fatigue. Teaching is therefore carefully adapted, with achievable personal targets and regular opportunities to recognise progress.

The benefits extend well beyond the appearance of a page. When handwriting becomes more automatic, pupils can concentrate on the content of their work rather than the mechanics of writing. This can make extended writing, note-taking and assessment tasks more manageable and help pupils express the full extent of their knowledge and understanding.

At Blue Coat, inclusion is about recognising and removing the barriers that might prevent any pupil from flourishing. Sometimes, it is the smallest improvements in an everyday skill that can make the biggest difference to a young person's confidence and independence.



SEND COFFEE EVENING AND PARENT MEET & GREET REMINDER

Our next SEND Coffee Evening and Parent Meet & Greet will take place on Wednesday 18 November, from 4.00pm to 5.00pm at The Blue Coat School.

Parents and carers are warmly invited to join us for this informal event, where you can meet our SEND team, learn more about the support available in school and find out about the Graduated Response process. Information about external agencies and specialist services will also be available, and members of the ASD Training Team from Liverpool City Council will be on hand to speak with families.

To attend, please email senco@bluecoatschool.org.uk.

We look forward to seeing you for a coffee and a chat!



MATHEMATICIANS SUPPORTING MATHEMATICIANS: OUR SIXTH FORMERS LEADING THE WAY





One of the most rewarding aspects of life at Blue Coat is seeing older students give their time and expertise to support the next generation. Our developing mathematics mentoring programme provides an excellent example of our school motto, Non Sibi Sed Omnibus — Not for oneself, but for all — in action.

As part of our commitment to providing exceptional opportunities in mathematics, we are developing our Axiom Maths Circles, an exciting five-year enrichment initiative designed to nurture mathematical curiosity, confidence and problem-solving skills from Year 7 through to Year 11.

At the heart of this approach is the contribution of our talented Sixth Form mathematicians, who undertake training as Junior Mentors and work alongside younger pupils in small groups, supported by a member of staff.

Their role is not simply to explain how to arrive at the correct answer. Instead, they encourage pupils to think creatively, explore different approaches, ask questions and persevere when faced with challenging problems. The emphasis is on developing a genuine enjoyment of mathematics and an understanding that there is often more than one route to a solution.

For our Sixth Form mentors, the experience offers a valuable opportunity to develop leadership, communication and coaching skills, while sharing their own enthusiasm for mathematics. For younger pupils, having an older student alongside them provides an encouraging role model and a glimpse of the exciting opportunities that further mathematical study can bring.

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Importantly, the Axiom initiative places particular emphasis on ensuring that talented pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to sustained mathematical enrichment and challenge.

Alongside this programme, the school is also providing targeted one-to-one mathematics intervention during form time, helping pupils strengthen essential mathematical knowledge and overcome specific gaps in understanding.

Together, these approaches reflect our determination to support every mathematician, whether they need additional help with foundational concepts or opportunities to explore mathematics at greater depth.

We are especially proud of our Sixth Form students who are giving their time to support others, demonstrating that some of the most valuable learning takes place when pupils learn from one another.

THE 12 DAYS OF FOODBANK – SUPPORTING LIVERPOOL FOODBANKS!

We are delighted to once again be supporting Liverpool Foodbanks through our annual 12 Days of Foodbank charitable collection.

Starting on Friday 30th November, students are invited to bring in the suggested donation items each day to help support local individuals and families in need. Donations of items not included on the suggested list are also very welcome, so please feel free to contribute any additional suitable foodbank items you wish.

There will also be a little friendly competition along the way

🏆 Form Competition: The form that collects the most donations will receive a prize
⭐ House Competition: The house with the highest number of donations will earn valuable House Points

Every contribution, however big or small, will make a difference. We hope our school community will once again come together and show its generosity and support for this important cause. A huge thank you to all our parents, carers and students for your continued support of our charitable outreach programme. Your kindness and generosity are greatly appreciated.

Let's make our 12 Days of Foodbank another fantastic success ❤️









SPREADING CHRISTMAS CHEER: SIXTH FORM TOY DRIVE FOR ALDER HEY

This Christmas, our Sixth Form Charity Team, led by Emilia and Faridah, will be launching a whole-school Toy Drive in support of Alder Hey Children's Charity, helping to bring joy to young patients spending the festive season in hospital. The initiative aims to collect 400 new toys and gifts from across the school community, with donations being gathered, stored in school and delivered directly to Alder Hey Children's Hospital at the end of the collection period. To achieve this ambitious goal, each form group has been challenged to donate approximately 10 gifts, with around 60 donations per year group, helping us reach our whole-school target of 400 items.

Donation Categories

To ensure gifts are suitable for children of all ages, different year groups will be encouraged to focus on particular age ranges:

KS3: Babies and Toddlers (0-3 years)

Suggested donations include:

- Musical toys
- Sensory toys
- Arts and crafts sets
- Rattles
- Storybooks

KS4: Young Children (4-10 years)

Suggested donations include:

- Simple jigsaws and puzzles
- Plastic toys
- Character-themed toys (e.g. Disney, Bluey, Peppa Pig, Barbie)
- Arts and crafts activities

KS5: Tweens and Teens (11-16 years)

Suggested donations include:

- Gift cards
- Headphones
- Portable speakers
- Toiletry gift sets
- Self-care items
- Stationery
- Books and journals



Important Donation Guidelines

To meet Alder Hey's requirements, all gifts must be:

✅ Brand new
✅ Unwrapped
✅ Safe and suitable for children

Unfortunately, the charity cannot accept:

❌ Second-hand toys
❌ Clothing
❌ Very large toys
❌ Perishable food items

These requirements will be clearly communicated through assemblies, posters and form-time announcements.

Driving the Christmas Challenge

To encourage participation and create some festive excitement, students are developing a Christmas stocking-themed donation tracker, which will show our progress towards the 400-toy target. Updates will be shared regularly through Teams and displayed around school.
Specially designed posters will also be placed around the site, while assemblies and notices will help keep the campaign at the forefront of everyone's minds throughout the collection period.

Collection and Delivery

The toy drive will run from 23 November until 4 December, with daily collections taking place from form groups. Donations will be securely stored within school before being delivered to Alder Hey on 4 December by members of the Sixth Form team.

Christmas can be a particularly difficult time for children and families facing hospital stays. Through this toy drive, our students hope to make a real difference by ensuring that as many young patients as possible receive a special gift during the festive season.

Please support this fantastic cause if you can and help us make Christmas brighter for children who need it most.

SPORTS ROUND-UP



It has been another action-packed week of sport at Blue Coat, with some excellent performances in both table tennis and football. Our teams have demonstrated great skill, determination and teamwork, with several impressive victories and progression to the next stages of competition.

🏓 **Table Tennis – Success Across the Age Groups!**
Our table tennis teams enjoyed a fantastic week of competition, with success across all three age groups.

The Under-13 Boys produced an excellent performance, finishing runners-up to St Mary's and securing qualification for the North West Finals.







The Under-16 Boys were equally impressive, winning their competition and progressing to the next stage as champions.







Meanwhile, the Under-19 Boys continued the winning streak, defeating Birkenhead in the final to secure first place and progress to the next round.

A brilliant set of results and a fantastic achievement for all three teams!

⚽ **Football – Goals, Drama and Determination!**
There was plenty of excitement on the football pitch this week, with some entertaining matches across our boys' and girls' teams.



In an enjoyable inter-year fixture, the Under-14 Boys defeated the Under-13 Boys 2–0, with both teams showing excellent commitment and competitive spirit.

The Under-14 Boys then produced a remarkable attacking display in their English Schools' Football Association (ESFA) fixture against Shevington, winning 13–3 in a superb team performance.



Our Under-14 Girls faced a strong Wright Robinson side in their ESFA competition. Despite a determined performance, they were defeated 4–0.

There was also plenty of drama for the Under-18 Boys, who faced Maghull in the Merseyside competition. An exciting, end-to-end encounter finished 4–4 after normal time, before Blue Coat narrowly lost 5–4 in a tense penalty shootout.

Well Done, Team Blue Coat!
Congratulations to all our pupils who represented the school this week. Whether celebrating victory or learning from a difficult result, they continued to demonstrate the commitment, teamwork and sporting spirit we value at Blue Coat.

A special thank you also goes to our PE staff for their continued dedication to providing so many competitive sporting opportunities for our pupils.

KEY DATES

Date	Event
Tuesday 24th November 2026	Year 13 Parents' Evening
Monday 30th November 2026 - Friday 4th December 2026	Y11 Mock Exams Week
Tuesday 8th December 2026	Christmas Carol Concert
Friday 11th December 2026	Christmas Markets
Wednesday 16th December 2026	Term Ends for Students at 3.30pm
Thursday 17th December 2026	A-Level Prizegiving Event
Wednesday 6th January 2027	Students Return
Monday 11th January - Friday 15th January 2027	Year 13 Mock Exams



The Blue Coat School Christmas Card 2026

The school's Christmas cards are now on sale until Monday 23rd November, 8pm, via Parentmail



Congratulations to the winning artist, Y12's Livia

Cost is £5 for a pack of 10 A6 cards,

Cards will be delivered to students w/c 30th November

Inside message to read:
"Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year"

All profits will support the Enrichment Fund

Any queries, please email seo@bluecoatschool.org.uk

CHRISTMAS

RAFFLE DONATIONS NEEDED

Do you, a family member or a friend own or work for a business that might be able to donate a prize?

We're incredibly grateful for any contributions, big or small, such as:

- Restaurant and dining vouchers
- Days out and activity vouchers
- Electrical items and gadgets
- Beauty hampers and gift boxes
- Bottles of wine
- Cash prizes

Any other gifts/experiences that would make a fantastic raffle prize!

If you donate a prize, please email:
seo@bluecoatschool.org.uk.

All money raised through the raffle will go towards funding our Enrichment programme at Blue Coat School. Enrichment plays a valuable role in school life, giving students the opportunity to discover new interests, develop their skills and talents beyond the classroom, build friendships and gain experiences that help them grow in confidence. These opportunities can also help students develop valuable skills and experiences to draw upon when applying for university and planning their future careers.

The Blue Coat School invites you to:

An Evening of Advent Music

performed by our Organ Scholars and Chamber Choir

Thursday 26th November | 7.00-8.15pm

Parish Church of Our Lady and St Nicholas,
Chapel Street, Liverpool

Featuring a thoughtfully chosen programme of reflective music inspired by the Advent season, this promises to be a beautiful opportunity to pause, reflect and prepare for Christmas.

Free admission – advance booking required.
Reserve your tickets via:
https://www.trybooking.com/uk/HGVV

There will be a collection at the end of the concert with all proceeds supporting the BCS Enrichment Fund, alternatively you can donate using this link or QR code:

Special thanks to Keith Simpson for sponsoring the event

At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.



Online Grooming is when someone befriends and builds an emotional relationship with a child and communicates with them through the internet with the intent to commit a sexual offence. This type of victimisation can take place across any platform; from social media and messaging apps to online gaming and live streaming. Often it involves young people being tricked, forced or pressured into doing something they wouldn't normally do (coercion) and often the groomer's goal is to meet the victim in a controlled setting to sexually or physically abuse them. In some cases children may be abducted or have long-lasting psychological damage.





What parents need to know about ONLINE GROOMING



CHILDREN ARE MOST VULNERABLE

Unsurprisingly children are often most at risk as they are easy to target and unlikely to question the person who is engaging in conversation with them. Groomers will use psychological tricks and methods to try and isolate them from their families and friends and will often choose to target more vulnerable children who may be easier to manipulate. Predators will stalk apps and websites that are popular with young people and will use a 'scattergun' approach to find victims, contacting hundreds online to increase their chances of success.



LIVE STREAMING CONCERNS

Predators may use live video to target children in real-time using tricks, dares or built-in gifts to manipulate them. Grooming often takes the form of a game where children receive 'likes' or even money for performing sexual acts. Social media channels, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, all have live streaming capabilities, but there are many apps which children can use to live stream, including Omegle, Live.me, BIGO Live, YouNow and many more



ANYONE CAN BE A PREDATOR

The internet has made the ability to interact with strangers online easy. Many sites and apps are reliant on individual users entering their own information when signing up. However individuals can remain anonymous if they choose to enter inaccurate information and many online predator cases are due to groomers using impersonation techniques. However, often the greater threat comes from adults who 'hide in plain sight', choosing to befriend young children without hiding their real identity.



CAN BE DIFFICULT TO DETECT

Unfortunately, most children find the 'grooming' process (before any meeting) an enjoyable one as the predator will compliment, encourage, and flatter them to gain their trust, friendship and curiosity – 'a wolf in sheep's clothing' scenario. This often means children fail to disclose or report what is happening. If the groomer is also previously known to the child, their family and their friends, then this can make detection even harder.



FROM OPEN TO CLOSED MESSAGING

Online predators may contact their victims using any number of ways including social media, forums, chat rooms, gaming communities or live streaming apps. Sometimes there is little need to develop a 'friendship /rapport stage', as the victim has already shared personal information online and is communicating openly with others. Children may also be prepared to add other online users they don't know so well to gain 'online credibility' through increasing their friends list. Predators will often seize this opportunity to slowly build a relationship and then move their conversation with the child to a more secure and private area, such as through direct messaging.

EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS

Online predators will use emotive language and aim to form close, trusted bonds with their victims through showering them with compliments and making them feel good about themselves. Often victims will refer to them as their 'boyfriends' or 'girlfriends' and it can be difficult to convince some young people that they have been groomed, often leading to lasting psychological effects.



National Online Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday

Safety Tips for Parents & Carers



IT'S GOOD TO TALK

It's unlikely that you can stop your child using the internet, nor can you constantly monitor their online activities, but you can talk to your child on a regular basis about what they do online. By talking openly with them about online relationships, they can quickly ascertain the kind of behaviour which is appropriate or inappropriate. Ask them whether they have any online friends or if they play online games with people they haven't met. This could then open up conversations about the subject of grooming.



CHECK PRIVACY SETTINGS

In order to give your child a safer online experience, it is important to check privacy settings or parental controls on the networks, devices, apps, and websites they use. Disable location sharing if you can. If you use location-sharing apps to check where your child is, remember that these could always be used by strangers to follow your child without their knowledge. Ensure that you check options so that location information is never shared with anyone except those they have permission to share with.



MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA & LIVE-STREAMING USE

It's important to be aware of what your child is sharing on social media and with whom. Create your own profile and become "friends" with them or follow them so that you can monitor their activity. Similarly, always check on them if they are live streaming and implement privacy controls. Choose a generic screen name and profile picture that hides their identity. You may also feel more comfortable being present each time they live stream.



STICK TO 'TRUE FRIENDS'

Make it clear to your child that they should not accept friend requests from people they don't know and to verify friend requests with people who they do know. Encourage them to only interact and engage with 'true friends' i.e. those friends who don't ask personal questions such as close family and friends. Remind them to never agree to chat privately with a stranger or someone they don't really know and to never divulge personal information, such as mobile phone numbers, addresses, passwords or the name of their school.

DISCUSS HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Talk to your child about what a healthy relationship looks like and how to detect someone who might not be who they claim to be. Explain that groomers will pay your child compliments and engage in conversations about personal information, such as hobbies and relationships. They may admire how well they play an online game or how they look in a photo. Groomers will also try and isolate a child from people close to them, such as parents and friends, in order to make their relationship feel special and unique.

BE SUPPORTIVE

Show your child that you will support them and make sure they understand they can come to you with any concerns they may have. They need to know they can talk to you if someone does something they are uncomfortable with, whether that is inappropriate comments, images, requests or sexual comments.



Meet our expert

Jonathan Taylor is an online safety expert and former Covert Internet Investigator for the Metropolitan Police. He is a specialist in online grooming and exploitation and has worked extensively with both UK and international schools in delivering training and guidance around the latest online dangers, social media apps and platforms.



LOOK OUT FOR WARNING SIGNS

Child safety experts have identified key grooming patterns and advise parents to look out for:

- Secretive online behaviour.
- Late night internet or smartphone usage.
- Meeting new friends in unusual places.
- Becoming clingy, develop sleeping or eating problems or even bedwetting.
- Lack of interest in extra-curricular activities.
- Having new items, such as clothes or phones, unexplainably.
- Seem withdrawn, anxious, depressed or aggressive.
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends.



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