



The Gilbert School

Summer Term Safeguarding Bulletin May 2026

It has been a particularly busy few weeks in the world of safeguarding, health, and wellbeing. There has been significant coverage in the news around important issues such as online safety, the concerning rise of the 'manosphere', and growing awareness of AI deepfakes.

I have brought together a selection of key articles and resources relating to these topics. In addition, there are several timely and thought-provoking pieces that have been shared with me, which parents may find insightful. You may wish to explore these for guidance, advice, or simply to stay informed about the challenges young people may face.

Ms R Litton

Assistant Headteacher

News Headlines

Parental pressure fuels exam stress

The Sunday Times

Parental involvement in children's GCSE and A-level exams has grown significantly, increasing stress levels for both students and parents. A new book, *The Parent's Guide to Exam Stress*, explores this trend and its harmful effects, including sleepless nights and panic attacks among teenagers. Teachers report that many students feel under pressure from anxious parents, with some families placing academic achievement above their children's well-being. This growing over-involvement is driven by concerns about future job prospects, comparisons fuelled by social media, and increased communication from schools. Experts recommend a more balanced approach that focuses on resilience and cooperation between parents and children, encouraging parents to stay calm and recognise that setbacks are a normal part of life in order to reduce stress at home.

Half of UK children own AI-enabled toys

The Independent UK

Half of children in the UK now own an AI-enabled toy, according to a survey by the British Standards Institution (BSI). Despite this, 47% of parents believe their children would be better off without AI. Concerns about safety are prevalent, with 75% worried about exposure to inappropriate content. Laura Bishop, BSI's digital sector lead, stated: "The frameworks to support safe, transparent and age-appropriate use are still catching up." The survey highlights a need for clearer safety standards as AI toys become more common in children's lives.

Obese children treated at NHS weight management clinics

The Times

Hundreds of severely obese children as young as four have been treated at specialist NHS clinics offering weight-loss injections and intensive support, amid growing concern over rising rates of childhood disease linked to obesity. NHS England said thousands of children referred to its Excess Weight clinics were already suffering conditions including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and liver disease, with more than 400 young patients prescribed the drug Wegovy since 2021. Health officials warned that severe childhood obesity could dramatically shorten life expectancy, describing the condition as one of the country's most pressing public health challenges.

Primary schools team with charity to stop county lines exploitation

Daily Mail

The *Mail* highlights ongoing efforts to protect children from exploitation by county lines drug gangs - with primary schools teaming up with the charity Escapeline to teach children how to avoid being drawn into criminality. A headteacher tells the paper that Year Six children in Bridgwater have been drawn into exploitation - and that "we've also seen much younger children - Key Stage One [ages five-to-seven] - being drawn into it without understanding what they're doing".

Alarm over growing knife violence among young teens

The Times

A national study of child deaths in England shows a rise in knife-related killings among under-18s, with 36 deaths recorded in 2023-24 compared to 21 in 2019-20. The average age of victims is 14.4, equating to at least two school-age children dying from knife injuries each month. Experts highlight the growing role of social media in facilitating violence, with platforms used to share harmful content and coordinate attacks. Police warn that exposure to violent material and weapon imagery is increasingly common among young people. Researchers and law enforcement call for targeted policing in high-risk areas, tighter controls on online knife sales, and stronger regulation of social media content. Concerns are also raised about the ease with which children can access weapons, with some carrying knives due to fear or bullying.

Lords push for under-16 social media ban in challenge to Starmer

The Sunday Telegraph

The House of Lords is poised to challenge Sir Keir Starmer for a third time by advocating for an Australian-style ban on social media for those under 16, proposing implementation within a year. Lord Nash's amendment suggests a definitive age limit rather than a consultation-led approach, following recent US rulings that hold social media firms accountable for detrimental impacts on children's mental health. The amendment is set for consideration, but if it passes, it may trigger further contention in the Commons, potentially delaying the legislation. Prominent figures, including Baroness Cass, support urgent action to protect children from harmful social media influences. Sir Keir remains open-minded regarding the ban but acknowledges the need for stronger regulatory measures against addictive social media features.

Ofcom probes Telegram over child safety

City AM The Guardian

Ofcom has launched an investigation into Telegram after discovering child sexual abuse material on the platform. The regulator is also examining teen chat sites Teen Chat and Chat Avenue for compliance with the Online Safety Act. Ofcom's director of enforcement, Suzanne Cater, said: "These firms must do more to protect children, or face serious consequences." The Online Safety Act allows Ofcom to impose fines up to £18m. Despite issuing nearly £3m in fines, many remain unpaid, highlighting challenges in enforcement against non-compliant platforms.

Weak parenting blamed for classroom disruption

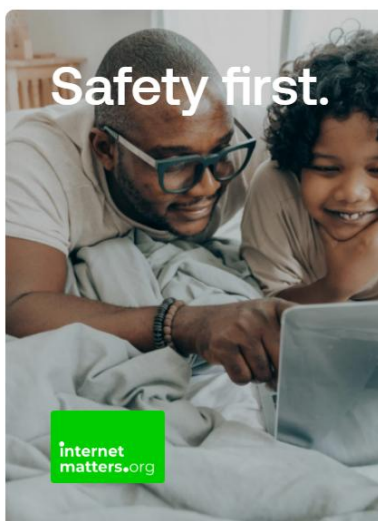
The Daily Telegraph

Weak-willed parenting is blamed for poor classroom behaviour, according to Tom Bennett, the Department for Education's ambassador for attendance and behaviour. He notes a cultural disconnect between parents and teachers regarding responsibility for disruptive students. Bennett highlights increased indiscipline in schools due to parents not setting boundaries, citing a rise in classroom violence - with 16,000 suspensions for assaults in the autumn term 2024-25 alone. He argues that "gentle parenting" contributes to this issue, and many parents mistakenly believe kindness will ensure good behaviour. The COVID-19 lockdowns' impact on children's social skills further exacerbates these challenges, especially for those who began school during this period, leading to difficulties in self-regulation and social interactions.

Online Safety Controls:

Useful links for implementing online safety controls:

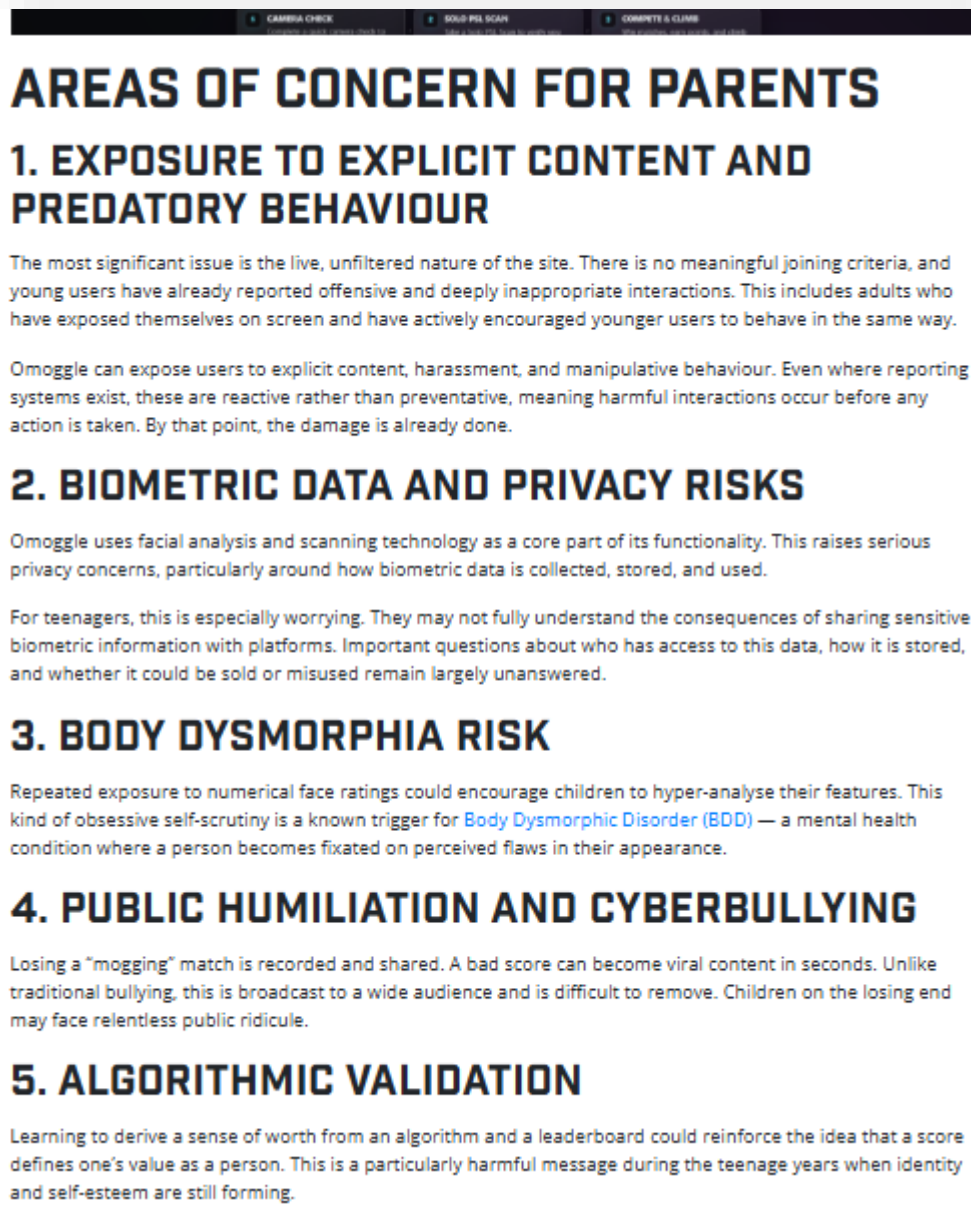
[Find The Right Words - Virgin Media O2](#)



Internet Matters supports parents and professionals with comprehensive resources and expert guidance to help them navigate the ever-changing world of child internet safety.

The goals

- Support parents and carers on all aspects of children's digital wellbeing
- Provide tailored guidance for the most vulnerable young people and their wide support network
- Bring together industry leaders and experts with the shared mission of improving online safety



The screenshot shows a mobile application interface with a dark header containing three steps: 'CAMERA CHECK', 'SOUL PSL SCAN', and 'COMPLETE & CLIMB'. Below the header, the main content is titled 'AREAS OF CONCERN FOR PARENTS' and lists five numbered sections: 1. EXPOSURE TO EXPLICIT CONTENT AND PREDATORY BEHAVIOUR, 2. BIOMETRIC DATA AND PRIVACY RISKS, 3. BODY DYSMORPHIA RISK, 4. PUBLIC HUMILIATION AND CYBERBULLYING, and 5. ALGORITHMIC VALIDATION. Each section includes a brief explanatory paragraph.

AREAS OF CONCERN FOR PARENTS

1. EXPOSURE TO EXPLICIT CONTENT AND PREDATORY BEHAVIOUR

The most significant issue is the live, unfiltered nature of the site. There is no meaningful joining criteria, and young users have already reported offensive and deeply inappropriate interactions. This includes adults who have exposed themselves on screen and have actively encouraged younger users to behave in the same way.

Omoggle can expose users to explicit content, harassment, and manipulative behaviour. Even where reporting systems exist, these are reactive rather than preventative, meaning harmful interactions occur before any action is taken. By that point, the damage is already done.

2. BIOMETRIC DATA AND PRIVACY RISKS

Omoggle uses facial analysis and scanning technology as a core part of its functionality. This raises serious privacy concerns, particularly around how biometric data is collected, stored, and used.

For teenagers, this is especially worrying. They may not fully understand the consequences of sharing sensitive biometric information with platforms. Important questions about who has access to this data, how it is stored, and whether it could be sold or misused remain largely unanswered.

3. BODY DYSMORPHIA RISK

Repeated exposure to numerical face ratings could encourage children to hyper-analyse their features. This kind of obsessive self-scrutiny is a known trigger for [Body Dysmorphic Disorder \(BDD\)](#) — a mental health condition where a person becomes fixated on perceived flaws in their appearance.

4. PUBLIC HUMILIATION AND CYBERBULLYING

Losing a “mogging” match is recorded and shared. A bad score can become viral content in seconds. Unlike traditional bullying, this is broadcast to a wide audience and is difficult to remove. Children on the losing end may face relentless public ridicule.

5. ALGORITHMIC VALIDATION

Learning to derive a sense of worth from an algorithm and a leaderboard could reinforce the idea that a score defines one's value as a person. This is a particularly harmful message during the teenage years when identity and self-esteem are still forming.

I thought you might find this helpful in understanding some of the language and key terms that young people may be using:

Be alert to key vocabulary, including:

Looksmaxxing	Softmaxxing	Hardmaxxing	Looksism
Sexual market value (SMV)	Looks-minus	Sub-five	Y-pilled
Mewing	Hunter eyes	It's over/rope	Mogging

Looksmaxxing: The process of attempting to maximise physical appearance through various methods to increase social and romantic standing

Softmaxxing: Reversible or 'normal' grooming (haircuts, skincare, going to the gym)

Hardmaxxing: Permanent or dangerous interventions (cosmetic surgery, steroid use, or DIY physical changes sometimes known as 'bonesmashing')

Looksism: The belief that appearance is the main or only factor that determines how a person is treated by society and their level of success

Sexual market value (SMV): A score assigned to an individual based on their perceived attractiveness and status, suggesting that human relationships operate like a marketplace

Looks-minus: A perceived physical flaw or a 'deduction' from someone's overall attractiveness score

Sub-five: A person rated below a 5 out of 10. Being a 'sub-five' is often viewed as a permanent barrier to ever finding a partner

Y-pilled: A nihilistic acceptance that destiny is fixed and cannot be changed, regardless of effort

Mewing: A technique involving flattening the tongue against the roof of the mouth to define the jawline

Hunter eyes: A prized facial feature characterised by almond-shaped, hooded eyes with corners pointing upward

It's over/rope: 't's over' implies there is no hope for a social life due to looks, 'rope' is a dark shorthand reference to suicide

Mogging: Dominating someone else physically, such as standing next to them and looking taller, more muscular or attractive in comparison



Betting on Boys: understanding gambling among adolescent boys.

This is an excellent piece of research from the US charity Common Sense Media, carried out with just over 1,000 boys ages 11-17, and given that most gambling starts off with the games that young people play it's an important area for all of us to understand.

The paper is quite large at 57 pages, but you will get most of the facts from the key findings at the beginning, for example:

- Thirty six percent of boys 11-17 have gambled in the past year.
- Online gaming is the most common context in which boys encounter gambling-like systems.
- Peer influence is strongly associated with whether boys gamble and how extensively they participate.

[Kids vs Grown-ups: what we really share online | ICO](#)



For Parents - Switched On to Privacy

Privacy of information online is an area which is growing and growing, but it can also feel overwhelming. The UK Information Commissioner has created a great new portal for parents and caregivers giving support and advice around online privacy with sections on explaining privacy to children, choosing privacy settings, advice on how to start a conversation, case studies and more.

Excellent videos to watch here!

What are Roblox Kids and Roblox Select?

Roblox Kids and Roblox Select are new account types specifically designed for users younger than 16. They feature games that have gone through a [multistep safety suitability check](#).

