



## Safeguarding Newsletter—Spring Term 1 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

We wish you all a very happy New Year and hope you had a lovely break.

All staff at Belle Vue have a responsibility to safeguard children but just a reminder to you that we have the following designated staff in place with responsibility for safeguarding:

Mrs. C Davies—Designated Safeguarding lead

Mrs. S Richardson—Deputy Safeguarding lead

Mrs. A Perrett—Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Mrs. C Mulligan—Deputy Safeguarding lead

Governor responsible for safeguarding: Mrs. S Rose

If you have any concerns regarding the safeguarding of a child/children please contact the school immediately on 01384 389900 or email [info@belle-vue.dudley.sch.uk](mailto:info@belle-vue.dudley.sch.uk). **If you suspect a child is in immediate danger please ring 999. If you have a concern during holiday time, please email [safeguarding@belle-vue.dudley.sch.uk](mailto:safeguarding@belle-vue.dudley.sch.uk)**

### Roblox: Grow a Garden

Roblox is a platform consisting of a collection of games. Grow a Garden is a popular game available online. The game is labelled as 'minimal' for content maturity, which Roblox define as "may contain occasional mild violence, light unrealistic blood, and/or occasional mild fear."

Roblox believe that the game play is suitable for everyone. However, as the game is on Roblox, it is important to be aware of the following:

Chat – strangers can interact with your child.

In-game purchases – this game does include in-game purchases.

Screen time – set limits for how long your child is playing.

Most of the content on Roblox is user generated, which may mean not all games will be suitable for your child to view/play. If your child is playing Roblox, it is important to monitor what your child is accessing, ensure they know how to use any reporting tools and set up appropriate parental controls.

Further information: <https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/articles/30428310121620-Parental-Controls-Overview>



## Group chats and Appropriate Behaviours

In today's digital world, group chats on platforms like WhatsApp, Snapchat, and others have become a common way for children to stay connected. While these chats can foster friendships, they also come with risks that are especially concerning for primary school-aged children.

### The realities of group chats

Group chats are often viewed as harmless, but they can expose children to risks parents/carers might not anticipate. These digital spaces can quickly become environments where negative behaviours thrive without adult supervision.

Primary school-aged children, still developing social and emotional maturity, may struggle with the fast-paced and often unfiltered nature of these chats. Many parents/carers are unaware of what can occur in group chats.

Unfortunately, children can be exposed to:

**Unkind behaviour:** teasing, exclusion, and bullying can occur more easily behind a screen.

**Inappropriate content:** children may encounter or share inappropriate language, images, videos, or other harmful content.

**Peer pressure:** children may feel pressured to participate in conversations they are uncomfortable with.

**Overuse and distraction:** constant notifications can interfere with sleep, homework, and family time.

### How can parents/carers help?

As a parent, there are practical steps you can take to educate and monitor your child's use of group chats:

**Have open conversations:** talk to your child about the importance of kindness, respect, and the impact of their words online.

**Set boundaries:** establish rules around screen time and appropriate online behaviour.

**Monitor group chats:** regularly check the content of your child's chats and discuss any concerning messages.

**Teach privacy awareness:** encourage your child to think before sharing personal information or images.

**Promote reporting:** let your child know they can come to you if they feel uncomfortable or witness inappropriate behaviour.

**Use parental controls:** utilise built-in tools on devices and apps to limit access and monitor usage.



**Teach your children to stick to these five rules from the very start of using group chats. Emphasise the importance of being kind to others and ensuring that everyone's experience is positive.**



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about GROUP CHATS

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Occurring through messaging apps, on social media and in online games, group chats are among the most popular ways that young people engage with their peers online. Involving, by definition, three or more individuals, these groups allow users to send messages, images and videos to everyone in one place. While they are useful for helping friends, people with shared interests or members of a club to communicate and coordinate activities, they can also leave young people feeling excluded and bullied – as well as providing opportunities for inappropriate content to be shared and viewed.

### BULLYING

Unkind comments or images which are purposely aimed at an individual can be shared freely in a group chat – allowing and often encouraging others to join in the bullying behaviour. If this content is shared in a group of their peers (especially a larger group), it serves to amplify the hurt, embarrassment, anxiety and isolation that the victim feels.

### EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

This common issue with group chats can happen in several ways: starting a new group, for instance, but deliberately excluding a certain child. Likewise, the chat may take place on an app which one child doesn't have access to, meaning they can't be involved. A child can also feel isolated when a group chat is used to discuss or share images from an event that everyone else but them attended.

### INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some discussions in group chats may include inappropriate words, swearing and unsuitable images or videos. These could be viewed by your child if they are part of that group, whether they actively engage in it or not. Some chat apps have a disappearing message function, so your child may be unable to report something they've seen because it can only be viewed once or for a short time.

### SHARING GROUP CONTENT

It's important to remember that – while the content of the chat is private between those in the group – individual users can easily share a message, photo or video with others outside of the group or screenshot what's been posted. The risk of something your child intended as private becoming public (and potentially going viral) is higher if there are people they don't know well in the group.

### UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Within larger group chats, it's more likely your child will be communicating with people they don't really know. These strangers may be friends of the host, but not necessarily friendly toward your child. It's wise for young people not to share personal details and stay aware that they have no control over the messages and images they share after they've put them online.

### NOTIFICATIONS AND FOMO

A drawback of large group chats is the sheer number of notifications. Every time someone in the group messages, your child's device will be 'pinged' with an alert; potentially, this could mean hundreds of notifications a day. Not only is this highly distracting, but young people's fear of missing out on the latest conversation results in increased screen time as they try to keep up with the chat.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats are often an arena for young people to gain social status. This could cause them to do or say things on impulse, which could upset others in the group. Encourage your child to consider how other people might feel if they engaged in this behaviour. If your child does upset a member of their group chat, support them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

### PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

In any online communication, it's vital for young people to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Discuss the importance of not revealing identifiable details like their address, their school or photos that they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they lose control of where it may end up and how it might be used.

### GIVE SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Remind your child that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded in a group chat. Instead of responding to the person who's upset them. Validate their hurt feelings and help to put them back in control by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. On a related note, you could also empower your child to speak up if they're in a chat where others are being picked on.

### AVOID INVITING STRANGERS

Sadly, many individuals online hide their true identity to gain a child's trust – for example, to gather information on them, to exchange inappropriate content or to coax them into doing things they aren't comfortable with. Ensure your child understands why they shouldn't add people they don't know to a group chat – and, especially, to never accept a group chat invitation from a stranger.

### BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If your child is in a chat where inappropriate content is being shared, advise them to block the users sending the material, report them to the host app or platform and exit the group. If any of this content could be putting a minor at risk, contact the police. Emphasise to your child that it's OK for them to simply leave any group chat that they don't feel comfortable being a part of.

### SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Having a phone or tablet bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be a massive irritation and distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to your child that they can still be part of the group chat, but that it would be healthier for them to turn off or mute the notifications and catch up with the conversation at a time which better suits them.

## Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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