ScreenSafe
Social Media & Online Safety for Parents, Children and Schools

Co-op Academy North Manchester

# Online Safety News

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## WhatsApp Introduces New Parental Controls for Teenagers

WhatsApp has introduced new optional parental controls for teenagers aged 13–17, allowing parents greater oversight of how their teenager uses the app.

### The New Controls Allow Parents To

- Manage privacy settings, including who can contact their teenager and see their information.
- Receive notifications about certain activity, including group chats and new contacts.
- Manage access to features including Channels, Status and Meta AI.
- Protect selected settings with a six-digit parental PIN.

### What Parents Need to Know

Parents and teenagers must both agree to link their accounts.

Importantly, parents cannot read private messages or listen to calls, which remain end-to-end encrypted.
The features are being introduced gradually and may not yet be available on every account. Keep checking.

**CHECK YOUR SETTINGS:** Update WhatsApp on both devices and, on your teenager's phone, look for **Settings → Parental controls**. If available, follow the instructions to link the accounts.

**START A CONVERSATION:** "Who can add you to WhatsApp groups? What would you do if someone added you to a group you didn't want to be in? What's the biggest WhatsApp group you are part of? How is it?

**Sources:** WhatsApp — About parental controls for teens | WhatsApp — How to set them up

## New Age Checks: Will Teenagers Need ID to Use Social Media?




On 29 October, Ofcom published new findings about how technology companies could check whether someone is aged 16 or over. This follows the Government's plans to restrict social media access for under-16s from 2027. This is a great opportunity to have conversations around privacy and data protection online.

### Ofcom Identified Four Possible Age-Checking Methods

- Photo ID checks, such as a passport.
- Digital ID services.
- Checks using bank account information.
- Facial age estimation technology.

### What Does This Mean for Families?

These are proposed approaches, not new checks that every teenager must complete now. The Government has yet to finalise how the restrictions will work.

Some teenagers aged 16–17 could eventually need to prove their age, while adults may also be asked to complete checks.

**TALK ABOUT AGE CHECKS AND PRIVACY:** Children may be tempted to enter an older date of birth or look for ways around age restrictions. Explain why accurate ages matter, how safety settings can depend on them and why they should never upload identity documents or facial images to unfamiliar websites claiming to verify their age.

**TRY ASKING:** "Why do you think apps are starting to check people's ages, and how would you know if an age-check request was genuine?"

**Sources:** Ofcom — How age checks at 16 could work, 29 October 2026

# Anti-Bullying Week: Why Teenagers Don't Always Speak Up




16–20 November 2026

**This year's theme is Break the Silence.**

For teenagers, bullying can take many forms online, including exclusion from group chats, humiliating screenshots, rumours, fake accounts and messages designed to embarrass or intimidate someone.

Young people may be reluctant to tell an adult because they feel embarrassed, fear making the situation worse or worry their phone will be taken away.

This can allow bullying to continue, so it's important they know they can come to us without fear of judgement or punishment, and that we will listen, support them and help them find a way forward, including if they are the ones who have been unkind online.

## If Your Teenager Tells You Something Has Happened

- Listen without immediately blaming or judging.
- Thank them for telling you.
- Avoid threatening to take their device away but discuss what steps may be needed to support them.
- Help them keep relevant evidence, report the behaviour and seek support.
- Involve the school or police where appropriate.

### Try This Conversation

"If something happened in a group chat that made you really uncomfortable, would you feel able to tell me? What would make that easier?"

Sometimes the most important thing we can do is make it easier for young people to ask for help.

**Sources:** Anti-Bullying Alliance — Break the Silence 2026

# Online Gaming: It's Not Just Younger Children



New Ofcom research published in October highlights how online gaming has become an important part of children's social lives.

For many teenagers, gaming is about much more than playing. It's where they spend time with friends, make new connections and communicate through voice and text chat.

However, Ofcom found that almost half of 13–17-year-olds reported concerns about behaviours such as trolling, abuse and deliberate harassment in gaming.

### What Can Parents Do?

- Ask who your teenager regularly plays and chats with.
- Check whether voice chat and private messages are open to people they don't know.
- Encourage them to recognise when joking crosses the line into bullying or harassment and remind them that their words and actions can hurt others too.
- Make sure they know how to mute, block and report other players.



### Try This Conversation

"Have you ever been in a game where someone was being really unpleasant? What did everyone else do?"

The aim isn't to stop teenagers gaming with friends. It's to help them recognise unhealthy behaviour and feel confident dealing with it.

**Sources:** Ofcom — Growing Up Gaming, October 2026 | Ofcom — Safer gaming advice for parents

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