



Thurlstone Primary School

SPOTLIGHT ON

SAFEGUARDING



EDITION 2

Helping Children Understand Loss

At some point in life, most children experience the death of someone they know—whether it's a grandparent, a family friend, a beloved pet or another important figure in their life.

Bereavement can be confusing, sad and sometimes frightening for children; especially if they don't fully understand what's happening. As parents and carers, your support can make all the difference in helping your child feel safe, heard and comforted during this difficult time.

Understanding How Children Grieve

Grief in children can look very different from grief in adults. Young children may move in and out of sadness quickly- one minute playing happily, the next asking a difficult question about death. Here are some common ways children might react:

- asking the same questions repeatedly
- showing changes in behaviour (clinginess, anger, quietness)
- worrying about others dying too
- having trouble sleeping or concentrating
- acting out emotions through play.

Practical ways to support your child

Keep routines going – children feel safer with predictable routines such as school, mealtimes and bedtime.

Create space to remember – light a candle, draw pictures, make a memory box or photo album together.

Give choices– if there's a funeral or memorial, ask your child if they'd like to attend or do something else to say goodbye.

Use stories– reading books about loss can help children talk about their own feelings.

THIS EDITION FOCUSES ON:

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH
BEREAVEMENT
AND
USING WHATSAPP SAFELY

Here are some trusted organisations that offer support:

Winston's Wish - www.winstonswish.org

Child Bereavement UK -

www.childbereavementuk.org

Cruse Bereavement Support - www.cruse.org.uk

TALKING ABOUT DEATH HONESTLY AND GENTLY

It's natural to want to protect children from pain - but being open and honest is actually one of the kindest things we can do.

Use simple, clear language

Avoid confusing phrases like 'gone to sleep' or 'passed away'. Try gentle but clear words such as:

"When someone dies, it means their body has stopped working. They don't feel pain anymore."



Answer questions honestly

It's okay to say 'I don't know' or 'That's a really good question' if you're unsure. Children often ask the same questions repeatedly - this helps them make sense of the loss.



Talk about feelings

Talk about feelings. Let your child know it's okay to feel sad, angry, confused, or even nothing at all. You might say: "Everyone feels different when someone dies. However you feel is okay."



Model healthy grief

It's okay to let your child see you cry. This shows them that sadness is natural and it's safe to express emotion.





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WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD COULD BE AT RISK OF HARM?

If the child is in danger Call 999 or 0114 2202020

If your call is not urgent, you can do the following:

Contact Barnsley social care on 01226 772423. Their offices are open between Monday and Friday from 9am to 5pm.

Lots more information is available by visiting....

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-young-people-and-families/safeguarding-families-in-barnsley/safeguarding-children-in-barnsley/safeguarding-information-for-parents-and-carers/>

KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE ON WHATSAPP

Here are some key steps you can take to help your child use WhatsApp responsibly and safely:

1. Set strong privacy settings

Last seen, Profile photo, About Info: set these to 'My Contacts' or 'Nobody' to prevent strangers from seeing their information.

Status updates: limit who can see their status to trusted contacts.

Blocked contacts: encourage your child to block anyone who makes them feel uncomfortable or is unkind.

Read receipts: you can turn off read receipts (blue ticks) to help reduce pressure to respond immediately.

2. Turn off disappearing messages

WhatsApp allows users to send messages that vanish after a set time, which can hide evidence of bullying or inappropriate content.

To check this setting: Open a chat → Tap the person or group's name → Tap 'Disappearing Messages' → Set to 'Off'.

Talk to your child about why it's important to keep a record of conversations and why messages shouldn't 'disappear'.

Using WhatsApp safely

As children begin exploring ways to connect with friends online, many are using apps such as WhatsApp. While these platforms can offer positive social interaction, they also come with risks that children may not yet fully understand. WhatsApp's age rating is **13+**, so if your primary-aged child is using it, they'll need close parental support and very clear guidance. It is important to note that age 13 does not reflect the content children may be able to view on WhatsApp; it does not have moderators previewing what users send to each other and therefore, the content may not be appropriate for a child

CHECK OUT THE NATIONAL COLLEGE WHATSAPP INFORMATION POSTER FOR PARENTS ON PAGE THREE OF THIS NEWSLETTER



3. Encourage kind and respectful messaging

Digital communication can sometimes feel less personal, which makes it easier to say things we wouldn't say face to face. Help your child develop empathy and kindness in their messages:

Think before you send: encourage your child to pause and ask, "Would I say this in person?"

Use kind words: compliments, encouragement, and friendly emojis can make a big difference.

Avoid teasing or excluding: group chats can become a place where some children feel left out. Talk about how to make everyone feel included.

Don't forward hurtful messages or images: even sharing something as a 'joke' can really upset someone else.

4. Know how to report and block

Show your child how to block contacts, report harmful messages, and leave group chats if they feel uncomfortable.

GROW TOGETHER: LEARN TOGETHER: FEEL LOVED.

5 STEPS TO Setting healthy boundaries

Children need guidance to build healthy habits with technology. Here are some suggestions:

05 **Screen-free times:** set limits like no phones after 7 PM or during family meals.

04 **Check-ins:** regularly check their chats together and discuss anything confusing.

03 **No phones in bedrooms:** this helps avoid late-night chatting and protects sleep.

02 **Real-life friend rule:** agree that they only chat with people they know in person.

01 **Keep the conversation open:** remind your child that you're their safe person.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WHATSAPP

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

WhatsApp is a free messaging service owned by Meta which allows users to send text and voice messages, make video calls, share multimedia – such as images, videos, documents and polls – and have group chats. WhatsApp messages are encrypted, meaning only the sender and the recipient can view what is sent. While this privacy may sound attractive on paper, this app comes with several associated risks that must be considered – especially for younger users.

GROUP CHATS

Group chats let friends talk together but can pose problems for young users. They might feel excluded – like discovering events they weren't invited to. Hurtful comments can also escalate quickly, as more people join in, amplifying the impact through a wider audience.

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it attractive to scammers. Tactics include impersonating a child in an 'emergency' to request money, or triggering a login code, then pretending to be WhatsApp and asking for it – giving them access to private messages and personal data.

CHANNELS

'Channels' let users follow topics anonymously, interacting only through polls or emoji reactions. However, fake channels can mimic real ones, spreading misinformation, hate speech, or phishing for personal data. WhatsApp may also collect and share channel-following info with third parties, raising privacy issues.

DISAPPEARING MESSAGES

Disappearing messages help share sensitive info, but young people may wrongly assume they're fully private. Senders can opt for their message to vanish after 24 hours, 7 days, or 90 days – or for media, after one view. However, recipients can still save them by bookmarking or taking screenshots, reducing their privacy.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's simplicity makes sharing news quick – accurate or not. To help curb misinformation, messages forwarded over five times now show a 'Forwarded many times' label with a double arrow. This alerts users that the message isn't original and may be unreliable.

CHAT LOCK

The new 'Chat lock' feature lets users store specific messages in a separate passcode- or biometrically-protected folder. While useful for privacy, it could be misused by younger users to hide conversations or content they know parents and educators might find inappropriate, including age-restricted material.

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's 'live location' feature helps friends meet up or parents check a child's route home. However, anyone in a child's group chats can track their location, potentially revealing their home address or regular travel patterns to strangers.

AI INTEGRATION

Meta AI on WhatsApp poses risks to children, including exposure to misinformation, inappropriate content, and data privacy issues. AI responses may be inaccurate, and kids might share personal information unknowingly. It can also hinder critical thinking by offering ready-made answers.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage children to treat unexpected messages with caution. Get them to consider, for example, whether it sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

THINK BEFORE SHARING

Help children understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy – and all too common – for content sent to one user to then be shared more widely, and even publicly on social media. Encourage them to consider how an ill-judged message might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval. To do this, go to 'Privacy', then 'Groups'. You can give permission to 'My Contacts' or 'My Contacts Except...'. Additionally, if the child needs to use 'live location', emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need – and then turn it off.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Have a conversation with youngsters about how they're using WhatsApp, emphasising that it's for their own safety. If you spot a 'Locked Chats' folder, you might want to talk about the sort of messages that are in there, who they're with and why they have been hidden. Also, if a young user has sent any 'view once' content, discuss their reasons for using this feature.

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.



Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/whatsapp-2025>

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