

SAFEGUARDING NEWS

Spring Term 2 2023



Our half termly newsletter gives advice and updates on all safeguarding matters to support keeping our whole community safe.

Spring has sprung!

Longer daylight hours are associated with an increase in daily physical activity in young people which brings with it many health benefits. However, participating in clubs of any kind also allows teenagers to grow as individuals as they can gradually develop their skills and confidence for going out independently. Indeed, it's important for teenagers to go out without adults when they are ready; a sense of burgeoning independence builds self-esteem which in turn promotes good mental health. It can also encourage more physical activity as teenagers who walk, cycle or take public transport are usually more active than those who are driven around by others.

Preparing children to go out independently usually starts well before their teenage years and each family takes things at a pace which is comfortable for them. As each young person goes through their teenage years, parents will be continually assessing how much more independence to give them. As the nights get lighter, you may find teenagers pushing for more and more independence so that they can stay out later. We have prepared some things for you to consider when having these discussions so that our young people can stay safe but also have fun and develop into independent young adults.

General rules for going out independently

- Clarify where exactly they can go whilst out
- Specify who they should be with so that they are not left alone
- Decide how they are allowed to travel so that they are not walking the streets alone
- Establish how and when they should make contact with you and what they should do if there's a change of plan whilst they're out

Once the rules are in place, they should be applied consistently and assessed regularly.

How teenagers can stay safe when they go out independently

- Pay attention to surroundings e.g. stick to well-lit areas with plenty of people around and don't get so distracted by headphones and mobile phones that you don't pay attention to things like traffic.
- Always contact home if there is a change of plans
- Do not go with someone you don't know nor travel with someone who has been drinking or using drugs
- Seek help if you don't feel safe

Emergency plans—things to consider

- Ensure that your children have all relevant numbers programmed into their mobile phone before they go out.
- Let them know that they can call you at any time and for any reason.
- Make sure they have enough money / a way to pay for an emergency taxi ride home.
- Discuss some strategies to help them say 'no' to any offers of drink / drugs without losing face.

Online safety

The internet and social media continue to grow at an exponential rate. Here at TGGGS we want to ensure that all members of our community are safe online, know how to get support and how to get the best out of their internet use. All systems within our school are monitored, including software to filter inappropriate content, ensuring that our students and staff are safe at all times. Should you have any queries about Online safety, please access our website [here](#) for more information.



We use CPOMS to securely communicate and store all safeguarding concerns.

Young people and mental health issues

What is the current situation in Britain? According to the NHS, rates of mental health disorders amongst 7-16 year-olds increased from 12.1% in 2017 to 16.7% in 2020. These rates have remained relatively stable from 2020 to 2022. However, it is worth noting that the rates of mental health issues amongst 17-19 year-olds have continued to increase (10.1% in 2017 to 17.7% in 2020 and 25.7% in 2022). Statistically, young people with mental health disorders are more likely to not feel safe online and live in households which have experienced a reduction in income. When we take a closer look at the ways in which mental health issues manifest in our young people, we can see there has been an increase in the incidents of self-harm. In recognition of the importance of this issue there is now a National Self-harm Awareness Day (held on 23rd February 2023).

What is self-harm? Self-harm is when you hurt yourself as a way of dealing with very difficult feelings, painful memories or overwhelming situations. Some people describe self-harm as a way to express feelings that they cannot articulate or they wish to change emotional pain into physical pain. It's important to remember that self-harm can take various forms and can therefore include any behaviours which cause a person to inflict intentional damage of any kind on themselves as a result of their mental distress. Whilst the rate of self-harm amongst 10-14 year olds sits significantly lower than other age groups, 15-19 year olds have increasingly higher cases of hospitalization in England. We can also identify a clear trend amongst young females. Incidents of self-harm for 13-17 year old females has almost doubled from 2012 to 2020.

How can we help look out for our young people who are struggling?

- Notice when they seem upset, become withdrawn or start to change their habits e.g. how they dress (maybe covering up wounds or disguising weight loss) and encourage them to talk about their worries and take them seriously.
- Keep all medicines / alcohol locked away.
- Encourage friendship groups to let an adult know if someone is self-harming as it is very serious and may be life threatening.
- Contact your GP and speak to the pastoral / safeguarding team school as we can refer you to agencies who can offer further support. You could also visit the [Royal College of Psychiatrists'](#) website or [Young Minds](#) for more guidance.

Online influencers

There has been a lot of news about social media influencers and the impact they have on us, but what is an influencer? Basically, they are individuals who have built large followings on online platforms such as TikTok. They post their opinions on things such as make-up, diet pills or books. In extreme cases, influencers can post things that spread false information or encourage hate speech. Many influencers get paid for the goods they promote, which means they may not be entirely honest about products. However, influencers are often seen by children as role models. Some of the content that influencers promote is not healthy; it can include unrealistic body standards, which can contribute to eating disorders. But it is important not to be wholly dismissive of influencers as there are loads of positive influencers who promote healthy ideas about body image and mental health. These are the ones we should be encouraging our children to follow. Click [here](#) for more information about online influencers or [here](#) if you are interested in attending workshops to find out more.



Collecting your child if they are unwell. We want to keep our students in school, but sometimes this is not possible if they become unwell. We know some families live a relatively far distance from Torquay, but we need to ensure that parents will collect their child if we deem them unwell enough so they are safe and supervised at all times. We welcome your support on this and, due to safeguarding concerns, will not allow students to travel alone with significant illness.

Reminders of our Safeguarding Leadership Team at TGGS



Helen Wilkinson is the Designated Safeguarding Lead



Anita Saunders is one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads



Lisa Neill is one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads



Debra Vanes is one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads



Sophie Cross is currently off on maternity leave.

We thank you for your ongoing support.

Please contact us at safeguarding@tggsacademy.org if you are concerned about your own child or another child at Torquay Girls' Grammar School