Horton Kirby C of E Primary School

PARENT GUIDE

Helping Children Spot Fake News Online

Simple tips for primary school families

Children see news, videos and posts online every day. Some are accurate, while others may be misleading, edited or completely made up. Helping children stop, think and check can make their online world safer and less worrying.

What is fake news?

Fake news is information that is false or misleading but is presented as if it is true. Children may come across it on social media, video platforms, websites, messages or through content shared by friends.

Pictures, videos and audio can also be edited or created using AI, so it is not always easy to tell what is real. Misleading content can be upsetting and may sometimes be designed to create fear, anger or prejudice.

Teach your child to STOP and CHECK

SOURCE	Who posted it? Is it a trusted organisation or recognised news source?
TIME	When was it posted? An old story or image may be shared as if it has just happened.
OTHER SOURCES	Can the same story be found on other reliable websites or news services?
PICTURES	Do the images or videos look genuine? Could they have been edited, generated by AI or taken from somewhere else?
PURPOSE	Why was it created? Is it trying to make you angry or frightened, change your opinion, or persuade you to click or share?

A few helpful habits at home

- Read beyond the headline. Headlines can be designed to grab attention and may not tell the whole story.
- Check before sharing. Encourage your child to ask an adult if they are unsure whether something is true.

- Talk calmly about worrying content. Let your child know they can come to you if something online makes them frightened, confused or uncomfortable.
- Use trusted fact-checking and child-friendly sources together rather than relying on a single post or video.

When should I be concerned?

A change in behaviour does not automatically mean that a child is being influenced by harmful content. However, it can be helpful to notice significant changes, particularly when several happen together.

- Becoming more isolated from family or friends
- Becoming unusually angry or secretive
- Being unwilling to discuss their views
- Repeating fixed phrases or ideas without being able to explain them
- Showing a sudden lack of respect or hostility towards other people
- Becoming much more secretive about internet use

If you are worried: talk to your child calmly and contact the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or another member of the safeguarding team for advice and support.

Useful places for families

Childline: Advice for children about spotting fake news. www.childline.org.uk

Full Fact: Independent fact-checking. fullfact.org

SHARE Checklist: Government guidance for checking information before sharing it. sharechecklist.gov.uk

Educate Against Hate: Information for parents and schools about extremism and harmful online influences. educateagainsthate.com

NSPCC: Online safety and safeguarding advice for families. nspcc.org.uk

Remember: Pause • Check • Ask • Then Share

Adapted into parent-friendly language from the supplied safeguarding factsheet (December 2024).