

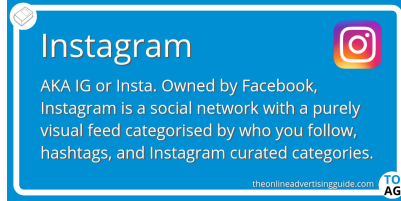
## Introduction

*The Achieve and Learn Trust believes that nothing is more important than safeguarding the young people in our schools.*

This half term we will be responding to parent requests for more information on online safety and how to manage the risks of some of the most commonly used apps by young people.

This week we will be looking at the popular app of Instagram — risks and what parents can do ensure their child is safe online.

## What is Instagram?



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## What are the concerns?

## What should I look out for?

<p><b>1. Mental Health and Self-Esteem</b></p> <p>Instagram promotes idealised images of people's lives. Young people may compare themselves to these unrealistic portrayals, leading to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, anxiety, and even depression.</p>	Increased self-criticism, especially about appearance, popularity, or lifestyle.
	Frequent comparison to others or comments like "everyone has a better life than me."
	Mood swings, irritability, or withdrawal after using Instagram.
	Obsessive behaviour around posting the "perfect" photo or deleting posts with low engagement.
<p><b>2. Cyberbullying</b></p> <p>Instagram can be a platform for bullying. Through hurtful comments, exclusion from group chats, or anonymous messaging. Unlike face-to-face bullying, it can happen 24/7 and often goes unnoticed by adults.</p>	Decline in self-confidence or expressing feelings of worthlessness.
	Reluctance to check their phone or sudden changes in phone usage.
	Emotional reactions (e.g., sadness, anger, anxiety) immediately after being online.
	Avoidance of social situations or friends they used to interact with online.
<p><b>3. Addiction and Screen Time</b></p> <p>The platform is designed to be addictive, using likes, notifications, and endless scrolling to keep users engaged. Students may struggle with focus, sleep disruption and reduced time for school work or physical activity.</p>	Deleting or creating new accounts frequently (to escape bullying or harassment).
	Changes in sleep or appetite tied to distress.
	Struggles to put the phone down—even during meals, bedtime, or class.
	Sleep problems or staying up late on their phone.
<p><b>4. Inappropriate Content and Exposure</b></p> <p>Despite age restrictions and moderation, teens can be exposed to sexual content, violent imagery, harmful trends, or content promoting eating disorders, self-harm, or substance use.</p>	Drop in academic performance or inability to concentrate.
	Less interest in hobbies, outdoor activities, or face-to-face friendships.
	Frustration when screen time is limited.
	Sudden changes in behaviour or language that seem out of character.
<p><b>5. Privacy and Online Safety</b></p> <p>Young people may not fully understand privacy settings. They can overshare personal information, be contacted by strangers, or fall victim to scams and grooming.</p>	Excessive secrecy about online activity or quickly hiding screens.
	Following or interacting with accounts that glorify harmful behaviours (e.g. pro-anorexia, violence).
	Expressing unhealthy ideas about body image, gender roles, or relationships.
	Engaging in conversations with unknown people or reluctance to disclose who they're talking to.
	Sharing too much personal information publicly.
Receiving strange messages or gifts from unknown accounts.	
Discovery of multiple Instagram accounts (some teens make "finstas" - fake insta).	
Anxiety or fear about being watched or exposed online.	

## What can parents do?

A parent safety guide can be accessed following this [LINK](#)

The guide has helpful step by step by step images on how to:

- Manage privacy settings
- Share content to only close friends
- Control who can message you
- Report inappropriate content
- Request further support
- Manage and block interactions
- View activity logs.
- Mute or restrict accounts

## TIPS FOR PARENTS & CARERS OF TEENS



### 1 TAKE THE TIME

Talk to your teen about what they get up to online and show an active interest in the things that they enjoy—they're more likely to come to you with any concerns or issues they may have if you're also engaged in the positives.

### 2 USE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Start conversations about what your teen gets up to when they're online to help them understand the opportunities and implications of their choices and behaviours.

For example:

- What kind of things do you use the internet for—learning, socialising, gaming, entertainment?
- What are some of the things you like and dislike about being online?
- What are some of the things you think about when you post on social media?
- Do you know all of your followers?
- Have you ever felt uncomfortable about anything you've seen online?

### 3 CHOOSE YOUR MOMENT

It's often easier to have conversations about potentially tricky topics like online safety when you and your teen are engaged in something else. Try talking to them when you're doing an activity together that you both enjoy, like going for a walk, baking, or playing sports.

### 4 SHARE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES

Talk about your online life with your children to get the conversation started. You could share something you've enjoyed, for example, or share something you've seen that concerned or worried you, and ask what they would have done in that situation.

### 5 BE OPEN

Make sure your teen knows that if they come up against any problems online, they can come and speak to you or another trusted adult about it, and that the conversation will be open and constructive.

### 1 LEARN ABOUT ACTIVE LISTENING

This means really listening, without interrupting, to what your teens say about their social media use and screen time needs.

### 2 ESTABLISH YOUR RULES EARLY ON

Perhaps set a digital sunset, e.g., the time each night they come offline. Negotiate with them and then review the rules regularly.

### 3 DON'T ASSUME THE WORST

Sometimes parents may expect the worst out of fear or ignorance. Educate yourself about social media and engage with your teens around it. Stay calm.

### 4 SIDE-BY-SIDE CONVERSATIONS

Be curious about how screen time on social media affects your teenager. Do you notice changes in their behaviour? If so, talk to them about it calmly—side by side, e.g. in the car, on walks, or shopping trips. It will feel less confrontational for a teen than face to face.

### 5 HELP YOUR TEEN CURATE A POSITIVE PRESENCE ONLINE

Encourage them to find the accounts that make them feel better about themselves or are indeed useful to them, and balance out time online with time outside—alone, with friends, or with family.

## TIPS ON TALKING TO YOUR TEEN

