



Birchensale Middle School

B E L O N G M O T I V A T E S U C C E E D

Newsletter 24th January 2025

BREAKFAST CLUB

Our breakfast club currently runs from 7.50am until 8.30am every morning, this is an opportunity for pupils to purchase breakfast and a drink in a warm, safe environment run by a member of staff. Your child does not have to attend every day so you can choose days that suit you.

If you would like anymore information please email enquiries@birchensale.bmat.co.uk

From September 2025, as part of our improvement and extension of wraparound care breakfast club will be open from 7.30am, more information will be sent to parents leading up to this time.

In the meantime, just a polite reminder that children should not arrive at school for breakfast club until 7.50am, we do not have staff to supervise them until this time and this creates a safeguarding concern. If children do arrive before 7.50am they will have to wait outside.

Thank you for understanding.

CAR PARKING

Please can parents/guardians/carers be mindful of their speed when dropping off and collecting children. Can you also please ensure you do not block the car park.

It is very busy at the start, and particularly the end of the school day, so please take extra care to keep pupils safe and to minimise disruption to local residents.

Thank you.

**ATTEND TODAY
ACHIEVE
TOMORROW**



Birchensale Middle School

SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow us on social media, just click the logo below for Facebook or X(twitter) and follow the link



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

March 31st year 7 parents evening

July 9th and 10th transition days

NEED TO SPEAK TO A MEMBER OF STAFF?

Staff are unfortunately, not always available to take your telephone call, see you in person, or respond to your email immediately. If you wish to pass on a message, arrange a meeting or ask a teacher to call you then please email us enquiries@birchensale.bmat.co.uk or call us on 01527 68430.

If you have a safeguarding concern then this will be dealt with as a priority so please contact us immediately.

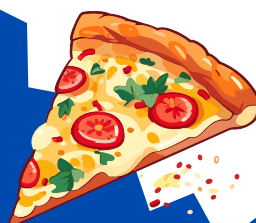
The school office is open from 08.00am to 3.45pm Monday to Friday term time only.

Our emails are monitored between 08.00am and 3.30pm Monday to Friday term time only.

PIZZA DAY

Thursday 6th February the kitchen ladies are having a pizza day. Pupils can have

Meat feast pizza or
cheesy pizza or
jacket potato with various
fillings all served with
wedges and peas
followed by
strawberry jelly or
fruit shortbread





Birchensale Middle School

Get Involved and Support Your Child

Join the PTA!

What we do

We fundraise for additional items and experiences for our children by putting on fun events.

Why join the PTA?

- ★ Be a role model for your kids!
- ★ Connect with other parents and teachers.
- ★ Make a difference to your child's school experience.



To learn more email Dr Austin:
austink@birchensale.bmat.co.uk



What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

TIKTOK

Adults tend to associate online videos with YouTube – but among teens, TikTok is king. The app provides a stream of short clips tailored to users' interests, based on what they've already watched. Around half of British children use TikTok, and while much of the content is benign, Ofcom considers it the app where youngsters "were most likely to encounter a potential harm".

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's following feed only displays videos from familiar creators, for the 13+ age group, the app's algorithm can recommend clips that are inappropriate for children. Most of these videos are probably benign, but the app's algorithm can recommend something inappropriate. If children then engage with this content, more than 10% of the app's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the huge number of uploads means that a small amount of inappropriate content is likely to be seen.

BODY IMAGE AND DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

According to Ofcom, most online harms for children are body image related. Girls (particularly university-aged, body-positive and so on) and dangerous stunts for boys. Both are prevalent on TikTok. One extreme example of the latter was the "blackout" trend, which involved users taking a video of themselves and then passing out from a lack of oxygen. This led to the deaths of several children. TikTok led to the deaths of several children.

IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase gifts to support creators. Gifts range from £0.10 to £1.00 per coin. In 2023, TikTok's global revenue was £1.9 billion. In 2023, TikTok's global revenue was £1.9 billion. In 2023, TikTok's global revenue was £1.9 billion.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With more than 1.1 billion users globally, the potential for contact with strangers on TikTok is high – especially as users can follow anyone. If a young person follows a stranger, they can see their videos and comment on them. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

MISINFORMATION AND RADICALISATION

Although the short videos on TikTok tend to be more focused on the longer ones on YouTube, clips can still influence impressionable minds in a negative way. Not only is there a lot of dangerous misinformation on TikTok, but Ofcom reports that nearly a third of 12 to 17-year-olds use the app to spread misinformation. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

ADDICTIVE DESIGN

With its constant stream of eye-catching videos, TikTok can be addictive to young people. In 2024, UK children spent an average of 137 minutes per day on the app. This is a significant amount of time, especially for young people. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

Advice for Parents & Educators

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account to their child's, and control settings remotely. Parents can then turn on Restricted Mode, which limits the content that children can see. Parents can also set screen time limits, which can help to ensure that children are not spending too much time on the app.

BLOCK IN-APP SPENDING

If a child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can offer their wallet to prevent them from making in-app purchases. This will prevent them from buying TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase gifts to support creators. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If a child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's good practice to discuss the potential risks. Explain to them why you're worried about the app, and that they know to look out for anything that they're worried about. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

MEET OUR EXPERT

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, The Guardian, The Evening Standard and The New York Times.

WakeUp Wednesday

The National College

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

SNAPCHAT

Snapchat is a messaging app which allows users to send images, videos and texts to others. Its best-known feature is that anything sent "disappears" 24 hours after it's been viewed, however, users are known to take screenshots or use another device to obtain a photo of their screen. In 2023, Snapchat added a chatbot function called "My AI".

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

My AI is Snapchat's new chatbot, which replies to questions in a human-like manner. However, the software is still in its infancy and has significant drawbacks, such as biased, incorrect or misleading responses. There have already been numerous reports of young users turning to AI for medical help and diagnoses, which could be inaccurate and therefore potentially dangerous.

PREDATORS AND SCAMS

Predators can exploit Snapchat's disappearing messages by, for example, telling a user they have naked photos of them and will post them unless they pay. Snapchat's own research found that 55% of teenagers had experienced this – on this app or another. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

MY EYES ONLY

My Eyes Only is a hidden photo vault called "My Eyes Only". It can store sensitive photos and videos from the camera roll. However, it is not protected by a PIN. You can check for this by clicking on the icon which looks like two eyes. This takes you to the "Memories" folder which stores photos, stories and the My Eyes Only folder.

SCREEN TIME ADDICTION

Snapchat prioritises user engagement, with features like streaks (messaging the same person every day to build up a high score). The app also has sections called "Discover" and "Spotlight", which show tailored content to each user. However, this could also be seen as an attempt to hook users into watching videos endlessly. Furthermore, constant notifications can lure people into using the app.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some content on Snapchat is simply not suitable for children. The app's algorithm can recommend content that is inappropriate for children. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

ONLINE PRESSURES

Although many of Snapchat's filters are designed to enhance or remove the "beauty" effects on photos can set unrealistic beauty image expectations – creating feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem. Snapchat now also has "youthful" image filters (which still get displayed even if a user is not a teenager), increasing the pressure on users to look back in time.

Advice for Parents & Educators

UTILISE PARENTAL CONTROLS

Snapchat's Family Center lets you view the details of a child's account, including their friends list and where they've spent the most time. You can also set screen time limits, which can help to ensure that children are not spending too much time on the app.

BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger starts to contact a child on Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable, it's important to block and report them. This will prevent them from contacting the child again. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

FAMILIARISE YOURSELF

Before you allow a child to download Snapchat, download it yourself and familiarise yourself with the app. Snapchat has produced a parent guide to the app to help parents understand it better. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

ENCOURAGE OPEN DISCUSSIONS

Snapchat's risks can be easier to handle if you maintain an open dialogue. Explain to your child why you're worried about the app, and that they know to look out for anything that they're worried about. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

MEET OUR EXPERT

Dr Claire Southam 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 worked with the Australian government comparing internet use and testing behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

WakeUp Wednesday

The National College

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

WHATSAPP

With more than two billion active users, WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service. It's end-to-end encryption only allows messages to be viewed by the sender and any recipients. Not even WhatsApp itself can read them. The UK's Online Safety Bill proposes to end such encryption on private messaging, but for the time being this controversial feature remains.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it a target for scammers. Recent examples include posing as a friend or family member, or as a friend of a friend. Scammers can also pose as a friend of a friend, or as a friend of a friend. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

To start a chat, someone only needs the mobile number of the WhatsApp user that they want to message. This means that anyone can contact a user, even if they don't know them. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

CHAT LOCK

In 2024, WhatsApp introduced a feature that lets users keep their chats in a "locked" state. This means that only the user can see the chat, and it can't be accessed by anyone else. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

COMMUNITIES AND GROUPS

A community is a place where people can connect with others who share similar interests. Communities can be used for a variety of purposes, including sharing information, support and advice. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's "live location" feature allows users to share their location with others in real time. This can be useful for friends and family, but it can also be used to track someone's movements. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage children to be cautious when interacting with strangers on WhatsApp. Explain to them why you're worried about the app, and that they know to look out for anything that they're worried about. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to ensure that they are not sharing too much information. This includes setting their profile picture to a neutral one, and disabling location sharing. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

DISCUSS GROUP CHATS

Make children aware that there could be strangers in their WhatsApp groups. Explain to them why you're worried about the app, and that they know to look out for anything that they're worried about. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Check in with the child about how they're using WhatsApp. Explain to them why you're worried about the app, and that they know to look out for anything that they're worried about. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

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What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

INSTAGRAM

Instagram is a highly popular social media platform with over 2 billion active monthly users. The app is continuously updating and adding new features to meet the wishes of its audience, allowing them to upload images and videos to their Instagram feed, create interactive "stories", go live, exchange private messages or explore and follow other accounts that catch their eye.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ADDICTION

Many social media platforms, including Instagram, are designed to keep users engaged on them for as long as possible. They encourage scrolling and liking, which can lead to addiction. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

UNREALISTIC IDEALS

Children sometimes compare themselves to the influencers they follow on Instagram. This can lead to unrealistic expectations and feelings of inadequacy. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

GOING LIVE

Livestreaming on Instagram allows users to interact with their followers in real time. This can be a fun way to connect with friends and family, but it can also be used to share inappropriate content. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

INFLUENCER CULTURE

Social media influencers are sometimes paid to promote products or services. This can lead to children being influenced by their recommendations. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

PRODUCT TAGGING

Product tags allow users to tag a product or business in their post. This can be useful for businesses, but it can also be used to promote inappropriate products. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

EXCLUSION & OSTRACISM

Youngsters are highly sensitive to feeling excluded or ostracised. This can lead to feelings of loneliness and low self-esteem. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

Advice for Parents & Educators

AVOID GOING PUBLIC

If a young person wants to share their photos or videos, make sure they are not sharing them publicly. Explain to them why you're worried about the app, and that they know to look out for anything that they're worried about. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

HAVE AN OPEN DIALOGUE

Talk to children about the positives and negatives of social media, including the risks involved and how to stay safe. Explain to them why you're worried about the app, and that they know to look out for anything that they're worried about. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

MANAGE LIKE COUNTS

Due to the potential impact on mental wellbeing, Instagram allows users to hide the total likes on their posts. This can help to reduce the pressure to get a lot of likes. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

USE MODERATORS

Instagram has implemented a machine learning system to detect and remove inappropriate content. This can help to keep the platform safe for children. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

FOLLOW INFLUENCERS

Following influencers can be a fun way to connect with others who share similar interests. However, it can also lead to unrealistic expectations and feelings of inadequacy. This is not only a safety risk, but it can also lead to cyberbullying or grooming.

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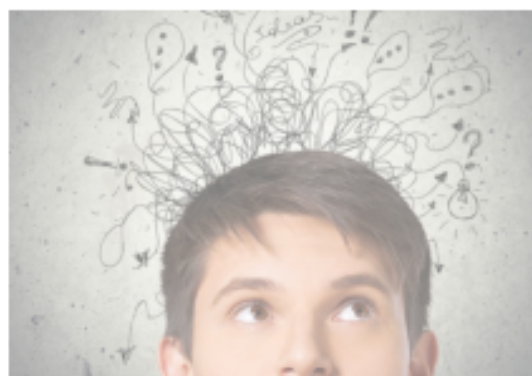
Understanding your Teen

Have you ever heard the phrase ‘the terrible teens’ and thought this is exactly what we are experiencing with our teenager?

Bringing parents and carers of teens together to meet other families in similar situations and develop your knowledge through peer support.

This relaxed group is designed to help explain what happens to the brain as our children hit adolescence and understand changes in behaviour, and what you can do to help your teenager will explore:

- Understanding brain development
- Behavioural difficulties
- Parenting styles
- Relationships
- Ways to relax
- Exploring feelings
- Attachment



Suitable for families with children and young people aged 0 - 19 years old, with 2 hourly group sessions running over a 10 week period.

**This group runs across the county.
Book by scanning the QR code to visit
www.trybooking.com/uk/eventlist/startingwellpartnership**



**For more details call 01905 520 032 or visit
www.startingwellworcs.nhs.uk/parenting-groups**

Provided by:


Herefordshire and Worcestershire
Health and Care
NHS Trust

In partnership with:



BARNARD'S



EVERY CONTACT SHAPES A LIFE



Birchensale
Middle School

WHO IS YOUR HOME/SCHOOL FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER

Justine Fitzer is your family support worker, she has worked in this area for 18 years and can support you when you need it.

Bereavement, grief and loss, transition to new school, change in family circumstance, attendance, friendships, behaviour, parenting, self-esteem, confidence, mental health, relationship breakdown, anxiety, trauma, are just some of the problems you may be going through and sometimes you might just want to talk to someone outside of your family.

Her role is to work closely with families and children who may be experiencing these, or other problems.

You can contact Justine via the school on 01527 68430, you can email her directly jfitzer@batchley.worcs.sch.uk or call her mobile on 07809 330825. If Justine is unavailable please leave her a message and she will get back to you.



worcestershire
county council

You can also find information and support on the Worcestershire county council website. click on the logo above and follow the link.



Birchensale Middle School



Attendance Matters



Children will have periods of illness during school time, however it is important to encourage attendance when your child is well, as non attendance or regularly arriving late can significantly impact your child's progress. If your child is worrying about attending school or if your child is being late for school on a regular basis you can contact our attendance team for help and guidance
rybarczyka@birchensale.bmat.co.uk

Yearly Attendance	Yearly Days Missed	Yearly Learning Hours Missed	Learning Hours Missed Over 5 Years
100%	0	0	0
97%	6	30	150
95%	10	50	250
90%	20	100	500
80%	40	200	1000
50%	100	500	2500



Birchensale Middle School



PE Clubs and Fixtures



W/C: 27/01/2025	Before school 8:15– 8:45	Lunch time 12.40 – 1.10	After school 3.15 - 4.30
Mon		All Years Netball <u>Sportshall</u> (AWD)	Year 7 Football @ Redditch United (ATA)
Tues			Year 7 & 8 Girls SELECTED PUPILS Basketball Tournament @ St Bedes (PHO) Year 5 & 6 Dance Dining Hall (AEN)
Wed		Year 7 & 8 SELECTED PUPILS Indoor Athletics <u>Sportshall</u> (PHO)	Year 7 & 8 Boys Basketball <u>Sportshall</u> (JSP)
		Year 8 Girls SELECTED PUPILS School Fitness Festival (AWI, ATA)	
Thurs		Year 5 & 6 Girls SELECTED PUPILS Indoor Athletics Jumping Trials <u>Sportshall</u> (AWD)	All Years Girls Hockey @ Redditch Hockey Club UNTIL 5PM (AWI, ATA) Year 7 & 8 SELECTED PUPILS <u>Sportshall</u> Athletics <u>Sportshall</u> (PHO)
Fri		Year 5 & 6 Boys SELECTED PUPILS Indoor Athletics Jumping Trials <u>Sportshall</u> (AWD)	Year 7 & 8 SELECTED PUPILS Indoor Athletics Practice <u>Sportshall</u> (PHO) Year 7 & 8 Dance Dining Hall (AEN)
		Year 7 & 8 SELECTED PUPILS <u>Sportshall</u> Athletics Competition @ Arrow Vale Year 7 (am) / Year 8 (pm)	



Birchensale Middle School



MALVERN TRIP PHOTO BOARD





Birchensale Middle School

THEO'S LIBRARY NEWS FLASH



WELL DONE TO OUR.....

Top quizzers

Year 5 - Zachary 14 books

Year 6 - Izzah 9 books

Year 7 - Ananya 14 books

Year 8 - Ammar, Kyson and Kayden 6 books

Top word scorers

Izzah from year 6 - 451,926

Olivia from year 5 - 335,903

Sylwia from year 6 - 291,153

Zachary from year 5 - 250,220

Dylan from year 6 - 192,153

Reading certificates are issued in assembly every week, remember, when you get a certificate bring it along to the library and you will receive a prize to reward you for your reading achievement.