



Marston Moreteyne VC School

Safeguarding Newsletter

Summer 2024 - Issue 6



We would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new Family Support Worker Gill Kent. Gill will join our Safeguarding Team. Gill is an experienced practitioner and has worked with families in other schools before joining us. Further Safeguarding information can also be found on our website <https://www.marstonmoreteyneschool.org/safeguarding/>



Meet the Team



Miss Short
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead - EVFS



Mrs Straccia
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead



Mr Storey
Headteacher



Mrs Watts
Designated Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Di-Folco
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead - EVFS



Mrs Kent
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead & Family Support Worker



Mrs Eames
Nominated Governor for Safeguarding



Free Parenting advice and support on a wide range of digital parenting topics including social media, screen time, setting safety features on all devices A superb resource for all parents and carers which is quick and easy to use!

To create your account, please follow <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/enrol/marston-moreteyne-vc-school> and complete your details. When you're set up, you'll be able to set 'Parent/Carer' as your user type.

You can access National Online Safety online via any device- including via our brand-new smartphone app. To download the app, please go to:

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/national-online-safety/id1530342372>

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.nationaleducationgroup.nos>

Alternatively, search for 'National Online Safety' in the App Store/Google Play Store.



Poppy Playtime

We have been alerted to a video game called Poppy Playtime, featuring a character called Huggy Wuggy. It is being described by some users as an "introduction to horror." Videos, versions of the game, and associated material are becoming increasingly popular on YouTube, Roblox, and other platforms used by young children.

What is Poppy Playtime?

Poppy Playtime is a **horror game** made by a small independent team (MOB Games). The game involves an unnamed protagonist investigating a mystery in an abandoned toy factory. As the player, you roam around the factory and collect VHS tapes to solve the mystery of what happened. You must solve puzzles while trying to survive the "vengeful toys" left behind. The factory's most popular toy "Huggy Wuggy" - a giant, horrifying blue creature with bulging eyes, wide red lips, and long limbs - actively follows you around as you try to complete the game. He appears in the dark unexpectedly to try and catch you. If you get caught, Huggy Wuggy bears his wide and sinister grin and eats you.

What are the risks?

There are multiple risks that can arise from children and young people being exposed to frightening content before they are prepared.

- **Added anxiety and stress** - Children and young people are still growing and learning. They may not be at a level of emotional maturity that would be able to process frightening content, even if it is intentional. Horror games could hamper that growth by creating unnecessary anxiety and stress.
- **Intrusive thoughts** - Everyone has the 'thing that goes bump in the night.' If children play this game or watch it, the Boogeyman could easily be replaced with characters like Huggy Wuggy. This could cause children to lose focus or sleep and could interrupt family rest cycles.
- **New fears** - The manipulation of child-friendly items into threatening characters exploits the sense of security a child would feel around these things. They may suddenly be terrified of something that had never been a worry before.

Red Flags to look out for in your Children

Content like this can scare children and affect their behaviour, especially if they're younger or have never been introduced to horror before. Being introduced to content with gory or scary themes before they have built resilience can result in a negative reaction.

Below are some red flags to be aware of:

- Finding it hard to focus or concentrate
- Appearing withdrawn
- Changes in appetite
- Sleep disturbances or nightmares
- Appearing suddenly angry, irritable, or teary
- Constant worry or anxiety, appearing fidgety or unable to relax
- Sudden appearance of new fears that weren't present before

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO DEAL WITH UPSETTING CONTENT

A Guide for Parents and Carers

Raising children in the digital age seems to be getting tougher, with the world currently experiencing so many uncertainties. From climate change to military conflicts around the globe, right now children across the globe can scarcely go online without being exposed to unsettling stories, images and ideas. Reassuring a concerned child can be difficult, especially when bad news feels omnipresent. We've put together some advice to help you in discussing upsetting events with young ones.

FIND OUT WHAT YOUR CHILD KNOWS 1

There are many ways that children are exposed to upsetting content in the media, both online and offline. Before swamping your child with information, find out what they know already. Show them you're interested in what they have to say, practice active listening and try to gauge how much your child has been impacted by what they've seen.



RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PLACE 2

Starting a conversation about upsetting content probably isn't the best idea when your child is studying for an exam or about to go to bed. Choose a time when they're relaxed and open to talking, to make sure you have their full attention. Remember, these conversations can become emotional, so choose somewhere your child feels safe and comfortable.



KEEP IT AGE APPROPRIATE 3

With younger children, try and keep the conversation more general and avoid leading questions and complex detail. You can go slightly deeper into the specifics with young teenagers but keep monitoring their emotional response. With older teens, you can be more open about the realities and consequences of what's happening – but again, do stay aware of their emotional state.



EMPHASISE HOPE 4

Upsetting content can make anyone feel angry, scared, sad or overwhelmed. Try to find stories of hope, generosity and strength related to the content you're discussing. Children often feel reassured when they know they can do something to help, so encourage your child's sense of control through activities which make them feel they're positively impacting the events they're concerned about.



MONITOR REACTIONS 5

All children react differently, of course, and young people might not directly say that they're scared, angry, anxious, confused or uncomfortable. Emotional reactions are natural when discussing upsetting topics, so take note of your child's body language and reactions. Allow them to express their feelings in a non-judgmental space and try to stay mindful of how they might be feeling.



CONSIDER YOUR OWN EMOTIONS 6

It's not only young people who find upsetting news difficult to process: adults also have to deal with strong emotions in moments of stress. Children develop coping strategies by mirroring those around them, so staying on top of how you appear to be regulating your emotion on the outside is important for supporting your child through worrying times.



SET LIMITS 7

Managing screen-time and content can be difficult even in normal circumstances, but especially in unusual or stressful periods (at the start of the pandemic, for example). It's virtually impossible to keep children away from upsetting content completely, but it's important to try to limit exposure by using parental controls, talking about the dangers of harmful content and enforcing screen-time limits.



TAKE THINGS SLOWLY 8

Try not to overwhelm your child with information all at once; instead, take the discussion one step at a time. You could make the first conversation a simple introduction to a potentially upsetting subject and then wait until your child is ready to talk again. Opening the door to the conversation and demonstrating that your child can talk to you about this type of issue is a vital first step.



ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS 9

Online, troubling images, posts, videos and stories are shared across multiple platforms, many of which your child might access. Even if the content is actually inappropriate, encourage your child to discuss what they saw instead of being angry at them for seeing it. Children are still learning that not everything online is accurate – you want to be their ultimate source of information, not their device.



FIND A BALANCE 10

There's often a tremendous compulsion to stay right up to date with events. Our phones frequently send us push notifications urging us to read the latest article or view the most recent video on social media. It's essential to remind your child that it's healthy to take regular breaks, and to focus on positive events instead of 'doomscrolling' and risking becoming overwhelmed by bad news.



BUILD RESILIENCE 11

News has never been more accessible. While our instinct may be to shield children from upsetting stories, it's important that they're equipped with the tools to manage this content when they are exposed to it. Talk about upsetting content more generally with your child and emphasise that they can always tell you or a trusted adult if something they see makes them feel uneasy.



IDENTIFY HELP 12

It's hugely important that children know where to find support if they encounter upsetting content online. Encourage them to open up to an adult that they trust, and make sure they're aware of who their trusted adults are. It is essential that children understand that they're not alone, and that help is available if and when they need it.



Meet Our Expert

Cayley Jorgensen is the director of FaceUp South Africa, which is a reporting system that is currently being used by schools and companies to fight bullying around the world. FaceUp helps give a voice to bystanders by encouraging them to speak up and get the help they not only want but need.



National Online Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday

Sources: <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-59479306> | <https://www.chitnet.com/blog/supporting-your-child-with-upsetting-content/> | <https://www.unicef.org/parents/how-talk-your-children-about-conflict-and-war>



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Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 18.10.2023

Useful Websites



Parental Controls Guide - <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/#:~:text=Parental%20control%20apps%20like%20Google,inappropriate%20content%20restrictions%20and%20more.>

NSPCC deciding what your child should see online <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/>

CEOP Using Parental Controls <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Parental-controls/>

iPhone setting up family controls <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/guide/iphone/iph00ba7d632/ios>

Setting up Filters on home internet <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parental-controls-offered-by-your-home-internet-provider>

Year 4 Walking Home



In the summer term parents / carers can give permission for their Year 4 child to walk home independently. This is to begin to prepare them for their transition to Middle School providing increased independence, confidence and road sense. If you feel your child is ready for this responsibility, please email the school office providing your consent.

If you and your child do feel they're ready to come home alone, it helps to go over some rules about staying safe.

- Make sure they know their address and your telephone number by heart, in case they get lost or have to navigate home from somewhere new.
- Talk to them about road safety. They should always look both ways before crossing the street.
- Remind them never to accept a lift from someone they don't know, or let a stranger into the house. They should never give personal information away - in real life or online.
- Remind them that if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable at any time, they can talk to you or a trusted adult.

If they ever feel like they're in immediate danger, they should call the police straight away on 999.

BEDFORDSHIRE DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP

IT DOESN'T HURT TO ASK FOR HELP!

Support Hub

What is a Support Hub?

- a place for you to go if you need to access support
- a place where you can contact a domestic abuse support service who will be able to help you safely

For more information, speak to a member of staff or contact BDAP@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

[@bedsdv](#)
[bedsdv.org.uk](https://www.bedsdv.org.uk)

The graphic is a blue and purple banner with white and yellow text. It features a logo on the left, a central title 'Support Hub', a list of bullet points, and contact information at the bottom. There are also social media icons for Twitter and Facebook.

Summer Water Safety



Bedfordshire
Fire & Rescue Service

As we are approaching the summer months following a particularly wet winter, I would like to provide some information and support in relation to water safety. Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service along with our partners including the Police and Local Authorities are regularly contacted by residents who are concerned for the safety of young people who are accessing water sites for leisure activities.

Popular areas for leisure activities include but not limited to;

- Priory Marina - Bedford
- Wixams Lakes - Wixams
- Kempston Mill - Kempston
- Blue Lagoon - Arlesey
- River Ivel - Shefford
- Stewartby Lake - Forest of Marston Vale
- The Old Mill - Sandy
- The Riddy - Sandy

Unfortunately, accidental drownings happen all too frequently and even the strongest swimmers can find themselves in difficulties. There are also concerns for young and vulnerable people who may not be aware of the danger and risks that water poses.

As well as changes in water current and weather conditions, outdoor water can contain hazards such as entrapments, weeds, rubbish, drains, broken bottles and pollution. It is also difficult to judge the depth of water; shallow water can change to deep water quickly and jumping into shallow water could result in serious injury. In addition, cold water shock can also occur when jumping into a river or lake on a hot day.

Advice on water safety can be found on our website www.bedsfire.gov.uk, in addition there is also a link to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution website which gives further advice on how to keep safe in water.

The fire service are unable to stop people swimming outside or in open water, but if you have concerns of anti-social behaviour please report this to the Police non-emergency number on 101.

If someone is in trouble in the water and needs help in an emergency, please call 999.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer.

Kind Regards

Lauren McEvoy
Community Safety Officer
Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service



If you have a concern about the safety of a child please speak to a member of the safeguarding team or you can call:

Central Bedfordshire Access and Referral Hub - 0300 300 8585

Bedford Borough Integrated Front Door - 01234 718700

For further safeguarding information and advice please visit our school website

<https://www.marstonmoreteyeneschool.org/safeguarding/>

Family Support & Help for Marston Families

At Marston Moreteyne VC School, we understand that many children and families might experience difficult times. The cost-of-living crisis continues to place our community under increasing financial pressure which, understandably, can cause stress and anxiety in the home.

Gill Kent is our Family Support Worker and she is able to help families with a range of issues including advice with debt management, food supplies, housing issues, bereavement and much more. Gill can be contacted via email Family.Support@marstonmoreteyeneschool.org or by calling the school office.

Further Help

https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/?utm_campaign=H4H_UK&utm_medium=Search&utm_source=Google&utm_content=Brand&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIitfvsfjL_AIVAp7tChOJ_gFBEAAYASAAEgLSYvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/get-help-with-the-cost-of-living/>

<https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/165/support-with-the-cost-of-living>

<https://www.marstonmoreteyeneschool.org/family-support/>

