SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

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Helping children grow kindness: understanding child-on-child abuse

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As children grow, they're learning how to handle big feelings, make friends and find their place in the world - both in real life and online. Along the way, they will make mistakes and sometimes their words or actions may hurt others without meaning to.

When that harm happens between children, it's called **child-on-child abuse.** It can sound like a strong term, but at its heart, it's about helping young people understand respect, empathy and boundaries - skills that protect both them and others.

What does child-on-child abuse look like?

It can take many forms:

- Teasing, name-calling or excluding someone
- Pushing, hitting or rough play that goes too far
- Sharing secrets, photos or private information without permission
- Sending or saying hurtful things online or in messages
- Pressuring another child to do something they don't want to

At primary age, children may not realise how serious their behaviour can feel to others - especially online, where tone and facial expressions are missing. They need adult help to see the real impact of their actions and to learn how to put things right.

How parents can nurture respect and empathy

1. Make kindness part of everyday life: talk about how we treat others - in person, in games and online. Encourage your child to pause and think before they speak or type.
2. Model what respect looks like: show calmness in disagreements, apologise when needed and speak kindly about others. Children copy what they see.
3. Set simple family rules: agree on gentle, consistent expectations such as using kind words, respecting privacy and taking a break before reacting.
4. Stay involved in their online world: explore apps and games together, discuss what's appropriate, and guide them on how to respond if something feels wrong.
5. Notice, praise, and teach through mistakes: celebrate acts of kindness and use unkind moments as learning opportunities - helping your child reflect, make amends and grow.

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Why age ratings matter: helping children stay safe online and in games

As children grow, technology becomes a big part of their world - from sharing funny clips with friends to exploring creative online games. While these activities can be fun and sociable, it's important for parents to understand age ratings and why they exist.
Age ratings aren't just about violence or bad language - they're there to help you judge whether the content, interaction and features are suitable for your child's emotional and social stage.

What are age ratings?
Age ratings are like guidance labels that show whether a game or app is designed for your child's age group. They take into account things such as:

- Language, violence or sexual content
- In-app chat and messaging
- Opportunities for strangers to contact children
- Pressure to buy add-ons or share personal details

They're not a measure of skill or intelligence - they're about emotional readiness. A game might look cartoony or harmless, but it can still include themes or online interactions that aren't appropriate for younger children.

Common age ratings for popular apps and games

App/game	Official age rating	Why it's rated that way
WhatsApp	13+	Disappearing messages can expose children to adult content.
Snapchat	13+	Disappearing messages, location sharing and public stories.
Minecraft	7+	Online multiplayer can include unfiltered chat and content.
Fortnite	12+	Cartoon-style violence and in-game chat. Turn off or monitor voice chat for younger players.