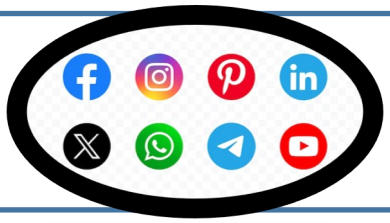
Impacts of Social Media and Artificial Intelligence

RUGBY HIGH SCHOOL

Young people are growing up in a fast moving digital world. With the right support, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and social media can be tools that promote creativity, education and empowerment. Without guidance and support however, they also bring risks.



How Can Parents/Carers support children?

Start with open conversations and avoid judgements. Ask questions such as "What apps or AI tools are you using at the moment?"

Teach critical thinking—Information online is not always accurate or unbiased. Encourage them to question what they see or read, ask questions such as "who made this and why?"

Encourage a healthy lifestyle—too much screen time can affect mood, school work and sleep. Set daily limits, take regular breaks and promote offline activities such as hobbies, sports and family time.

Discuss privacy and safety—Make sure your child understands: not to share private information such as location, school, passwords online, how to use privacy settings on apps and that AI chat and social media platforms may store data. Young people need to understand that once something is shared online, it is very difficult to remove.

Discuss Online Behaviour—Digital actions can have impact. Discuss the need to be respectful and kind, and to think before posting or commenting. Be aware of cyberbullying and discuss what to do if they witness or experience it.

Know the warning signs—be vigilant to any changes in behaviour that could indicate unhealthy use such as withdrawing from friends or family, sudden mood changes after being online, or secretive behaviour regarding devices. Remember to approach any concerns gently and supportively.

Learning—Try to stay up to date with the technology that your child is engaging with. Explore the websites and apps—know the risks and discuss these in a supportive way.

Risks of Social Media and AI:

-AI-powered apps and social platforms often **collect personal data**

-Risk of **data misuse**, or children unknowingly sharing sensitive information.

-Social media algorithms can amplify **exposure to inappropriate, violent or misleading content**. AI-generated content (deepfakes, fake news) can be hard to distinguish from reality

-Social platforms can be a space for **bullying, trolling or peer pressure**

- Excessive use can lead to **mental health problems** such as anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. It can also create addictive patterns (doom scrolling).

-Over-reliance on AI and **reduced critical thinking**

-Security risks such as AI chatbots being exploited for scams or fake profiles and bots manipulating social interactions

-Children may not understand the implications of sharing AI-generated content.

Resources:

- NSPCC Talking to children about AI
- Children Commissioner A guide for parents and carers to managing children's digital lives
- NSPCC Helping Children Stay safe on Social media (links to all parent safety hubs for main social media apps)