

Bilton School Community Christmas Message – Winter 2025

At Bilton School, we are proud of the strong sense of community that exists between our pupils, families, staff, friends and neighbours. As we move towards Christmas, we recognise that for some this is a time of celebration and togetherness — but for others, the ongoing cost-of-living pressures may bring additional worry, stress and uncertainty.

Rising food, energy and everyday costs continue to affect many households across Rugby and the surrounding area. We want every family connected to Bilton to know that **you are not alone**, and that it is okay to ask for help. Support is available locally, confidentially and without judgement.

If you or someone close to you could use some extra support this winter, the following local organisations are ready to help:

- Rugby Foodbank – Emergency food parcels for individuals and families who are struggling
- Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme – Financial help with food, energy and other essential household costs
- Act on Energy – Support with heating, energy bills and boiler repairs
- Citizens Advice – Free, confidential advice on money, debt, benefits and budgeting

You do not need to be in crisis to reach out for support — early advice and small interventions can often make a big difference.

We also ask our wider Bilton community to continue showing the kindness and understanding that defines our school:

- Check in on friends, neighbours and other families
- Share information about support without judgement
- Offer help in whatever way you can, even if it is simply listening

If you are worried about a family connected to Bilton, or if you would like discreet support through the school, please contact the **Safeguarding team in confidence**. We are here to help and to listen.

This Christmas, let's continue to look after one another — as a school, as families, and as a community.



Christmas Online Safety for Families



With more time online over the Christmas break, we ask families to continue encouraging safe and responsible digital behaviour. Young people may be spending longer on gaming platforms, social media and messaging apps such as Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat. Please remind students not to share personal information, be cautious when speaking to people they do not know in real life, and to report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Open conversations at home about online safety, privacy and kindness remain one of the most effective ways to keep young people safe over the festive period.



Over the festive break, a few simple checks can make a big difference:

- **Check privacy settings** on social and gaming accounts (including Instagram)
 - **Talk about personal information** – remind young people never to share their address, school, phone number or location online.
 - **Be alert to online scams** – festive offers, fake giveaways and in-game purchase scams increase at this time of year.
 - **Agree healthy screen-time boundaries** – especially late at night.
 - **Encourage open conversation** – make sure your child knows they can speak to you if something online makes them feel worried, pressured or uncomfortable.
 - **Use parental controls** where appropriate on devices, apps and games.
- If an issue ever feels serious or urgent, parents can also seek advice from national support organisations such as NSPCC

Top Tips for SETTING UP PARENTAL CONTROLS ON NEW DEVICES

In children's eagerness to start enjoying new digital gadgets immediately, it can be easy to overlook setting up the type of parental controls that can help to protect them online. If you don't sort those out from the very start, it can be an uphill battle – technologically and psychologically – to impose such controls later. Here's our rundown of what to look for when setting up the various internet-enabled devices that might be lurking under the tree at this time of year.

IPHONE

If your child's lucky enough to be getting their own iPhone, parental controls can help avoid issues like screen addiction and unsuitable content. Go into the settings and scroll down to 'Screen Time'. From here you can customise important settings including time limits on using the device, communication restrictions and content blockers. You can also lock your changes behind a passcode.

ANDROID

With Android devices, Google's Family Link app is your friend. You'll need a Google account – and a separate one for your child, which you should use when first setting up the device. Then, in Family Link on your own device, select 'Add Child' and enter their account details. This lets you specify limits on daily usage, restrict certain apps, block particular content and more.

PLAYSTATION

You can prep for a PlayStation before it's even unwrapped. At my.account.sony.com, create an account, then go to Account Management > Family Management > Add Family Member to set up your child's account, which you'll use to sign in on the console. You can restrict the age ratings of the games they can play and who they can talk to. On the PS5, you can make exceptions for any games you think are acceptable despite their high age rating.

IPAD

iPad parental controls are identical to those on iPhones. However, if you've got a shared family iPad and want to ensure your children aren't seeing anything age-inappropriate after you hand them the device, there's a feature called Guided Access (under Settings > Accessibility > Guided Access). With this switched on, young ones can only use the app that's currently open.

XBOX

The Xbox Family Settings app helps you manage which games your child can play (and when). You'll need to set up the console with your own account and then add a child profile. Make sure your account's password protected, so your child can't alter your choices later. You'll be walked through the functions at setup, but you can also reach them manually via Settings > Account > Family Settings.

NINTENDO SWITCH

Download the Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app on your phone, and you'll be shown how to link it to the console. Once that's done, you can limit how long your child can play each day, decide what age ratings are permitted and more. You'll also get weekly updates on how often they've used the device. These controls are accessible through the console itself, but the app is usually easier.

WINDOWS 11 PCS

On Windows 11, account management is key. Set up the device with your own account as the admin. Then go to Settings > Accounts > Family and Other Users and create your child's account (if you've already done this on a previous PC, just log in with those details). Microsoft Family Safety (either the app or the site) then lets you control screen time, what content children can view and more.

CHROMEBOOKS

Chromebooks' parental controls are managed via the Family Link app. Unlike an Android device, however, you need set up the Chromebook with your own account first, then add your child's. Go to Settings > People > Add Person and input your child's Google account details (or create a new account). Your child can then log in, and you can monitor what they're up to via Family Link.

MACS

Like iPhones, parental controls for Macs are managed via the Screen Time settings. Again, the crux here is to set yourself up as the administrator before adding any child accounts. In the settings, look for Users & Groups to create your child's account, then – while on their profile – use the screen time options to place any boundaries around apps, usage and who your child can communicate with (and vice versa).

SMART TVS

Smart TVs typically have their own individual parental controls. One of the most popular brands is Samsung – and on their TVs, you can control the content available to your child. In the Settings menu, under 'Broadcasting', you can lock channels and restrict content by its age rating. Even this isn't foolproof, however: some apps (like YouTube) might still let children access unsuitable material.

12 Top Tips for Children and Young People to Enjoy a TECH-FREE CHRISTMAS

The Christmas holidays are tailor made for families to enjoy relaxed quality time in each other's company – but with distractions like pinging phone notifications, the lure of games consoles and online Boxing Day sales, that can be more difficult than it sounds. Staying off our phones, laptops and tablets, however, can really help us to appreciate the things that genuinely matter at this special time of year. Follow our 12 top tips for a tech-free festive season ... Yule be glad you did! Merry Christmas!

CHRISTMAS CRAFTING

Get out the paper, glue and scissors and have a go at hand-making cards or gift tags. You could also create your own decorations to add a uniquely personal touch to the Christmas tree.

NATURE QUEST

Try a scavenger hunt in the garden or your local park. Challenge yourself and your family to find natural treasures that are symbolic of this time of year – like holly or pinecones, say.

CAROL KARAOKE

Sing your hearts out with a Christmas carol karaoke night. Pick out your favourite tunes and enjoy a musical celebration with family and friends.

WANDER DOWN MEMORY LANE

How about making a scrapbook filled with your favourite memories from Christmases gone by? Unleash your creativity while you enjoy reliving those magical holiday moments.

TRY REFLECTIVE JOURNALLING

Dot down your thoughts, feelings and reflections on the holiday in notebook or diary – you could also list some of your main goals for the new year.

WRAP IT UP

Take time to get inventive with some luxurious gift wrapping. Break out the wrapping paper, ribbons and bows to make parcelling up those presents into a creative adventure.

WALK IN A WINTER WONDERLAND

Delight in the great outdoors with some gentle walks over the holiday. The family can all wrap up warm as you add to your step count and savour the crisp winter air together.

BE A SEASONAL CHEF

Get the whole family working together in the kitchen for some Christmas cooking. Choose a recipe and whip up a festive feast that all of you can enjoy.

ENJOY A CHRISTMAS STORY

Christmas is a perfect time for sparkling stories. Get cosy and lose yourself in a brilliant book, from Dickens to Dr Seuss or a more modern favourite by Chris van Allsburg or Tom Fletcher.

SNOWY SCULPTURES

If we're fortunate enough to get a white Christmas this year, make the most of the opportunity by having a family snowman-building competition!

GAMES NIGHT GALA

Dive into some old-school fun with a tech-free games night. Classic board games and card games have stood the test of time for a reason!

GOODWILL TO ALL

You and your family could spend a day volunteering – perhaps at a food bank or helping a local charity. After all, kindness and thinking of others are part of what Christmas is all about.



Safety at Play...

It's important that teens have the freedom to be creative and push their limited.

Make sure your teens knows the rules of the road when doing wheeled activities.

Teach them how to be a defensive pedestrian, encourage them to remove headphones and put mobile devices away.

Ensure they know what to do in an emergency, including what to do if they get lost or feel unsafe in a situation.

Christmas Safety When You're Out and About

With more time spent out with friends over the holidays across Rugby, it's important to look out for yourself and each other. Stick together where possible, let someone at home know where you're going, keep your phone charged, and arrange safe transport for getting home — especially in the evenings. Avoid risky situations, don't accept lifts from people you don't know well, and trust your instincts if something doesn't feel right. Most importantly, check in on your mates and make sure everyone gets home safely.



THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT CHRISTMAS AND MENTAL HEALTH

26%

say Christmas makes their mental health worse

54%

worry about the mental health of someone they know at Christmas

41%

worry about getting into debt

83%

feel lonely

76%

struggle to sleep over the festive period

4 tips on how to feel a little less lonely this Christmas

Limit your social media usage

Volunteer in your local area

Consider scheduling a call with family or friends

Have a look at what places are open near you



At **Bilton School**, the wellbeing of our students remains at the centre of everything we do. Across the UK, more teenagers are experiencing **Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMHSocial, Emotional and Mental Health)** challenges, and we know that supporting young people requires a strong partnership between school, home and the wider community.

This section of our newsletter outlines how SEMHSocial, Emotional and Mental Health affects teens, how we can work together to support them, and what practical steps families can take to help young people feel safe, understood and confident

SEMHSocial, Emotional and Mental Health – A Student’s View

Life can feel busy and overwhelming, especially when juggling schoolwork, friendships, family pressures and the constant noise of social media. If you’re finding things tough — whether that’s anxiety, low mood, stress, or just feeling “not yourself” — you are not alone. Many students feel this way, even if they seem fine on the surface.

At Bilton, you can always speak to:

- Your Head of House
- A trusted teacher or tutor
- The pastoral / safeguarding team

Talking to someone is a strength, not a weakness. You deserve to be heard, and we are here to support you.

SEMHSocial, Emotional and Mental Health – A Parent & Carer View

Teenagers often struggle to explain how they’re feeling, so SEMHSocial, Emotional and Mental Health needs can show up through changes in behaviour: withdrawal, irritability, sleep changes, or loss of interest in school, hobbies or friendships.

Parents can make a huge difference through:

- Consistent routines
- Gentle check-ins
- Reassurance during emotional moments
- Open, calm conversations

If your child's changes in behaviour or mood last for more than a few weeks, or if you feel they may need extra support, please contact the **Bilton pastoral team**. We can guide you towards appropriate support, whether that's internal school help or external agencies such as **CAMHS, YoungMinds**, or your GP.

You are never alone in supporting your child — and neither are they.

The Bilton SEMH Toolkit

A practical guide for students, parents and carers

1. Daily Habits That Support Emotional Wellbeing

- Keep a regular sleep routine
- Spend time outdoors each day
- Maintain balanced screen time
- Break tasks into small, manageable steps
- Use “check-in moments” to talk about how the day has gone

2. Spotting When a Teen May Be Struggling

Look out for:

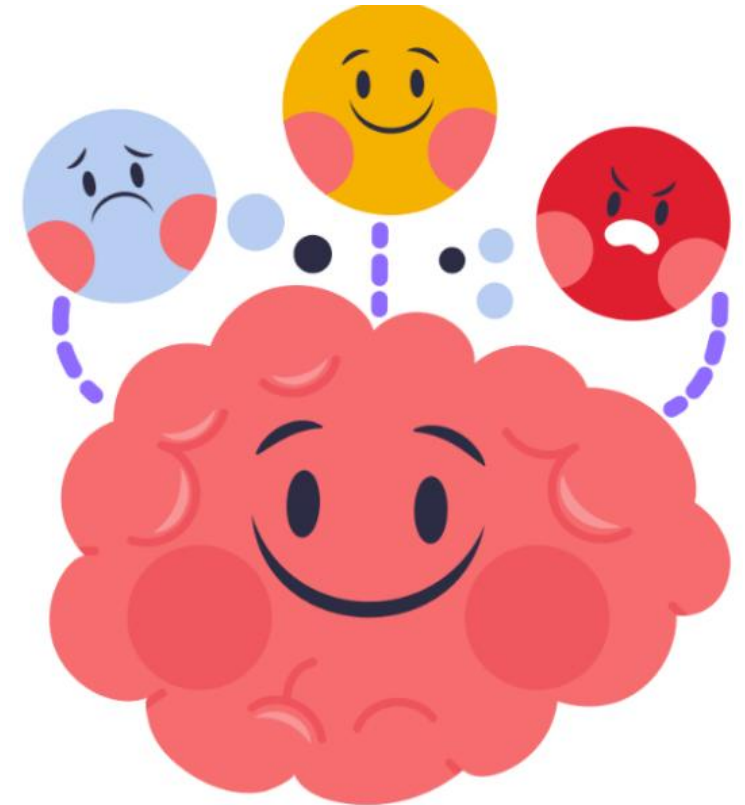
- Withdrawal from friends or family
- Sudden changes in mood
- Increased irritability or emotional reactions
- Difficulty sleeping
- Falling motivation at school
- Loss of interest in hobbies

These signs don't always mean something is wrong, but **consistent or sudden changes** are worth exploring gently.

3. Helpful Ways to Start a Conversation

For parents:

- *“I've noticed you seem a bit different lately — is everything okay?”*
- *“I'm here whenever you want to talk.”*
- *“How can I help make things easier for you?”*



For students:

- *“Can I talk to you about something I’m finding hard?”*
- *“Something has been bothering me and I’m not sure what to do.”*

4. When to Seek Extra Support

Please reach out for additional help if:

- Challenges last more than a few weeks
- Emotions are impacting school life or friendships
- A young person feels overwhelmed, unsafe or hopeless
- You are unsure but feel something isn’t right

Support is available through:

- Bilton’s pastoral team
- **CAMHS**
- **YoungMinds**
- Your GP
- Local wellbeing and mental health services

5. The Bilton Commitment

We will continue to:

- Provide a safe, inclusive school environment
- Offer accessible pastoral support for all students
- Strengthen early intervention and wellbeing strategies
- Work closely with families to support each young person’s needs

♥ A Final Word

SEMH challenges can affect any teenager at any time. At Bilton School, we believe that by working together — students, families and staff — we can help our young people feel secure, understood and ready to thrive. No child or family should ever feel they have to manage these challenges alone.

If you have concerns, please reach out. We are here to help.



There is always someone that can

HELP



Parents and Carers – During the Christmas holidays the Safeguarding team want to remind you that support is available

Warwickshire family information service

Looking for some help and advice? Try visiting Warwickshire FIS website for lots of free advice and guidance available to all Warwickshire residents

Website - www.warwickshire.gov.uk

Family support helpline and face to face consultations

Family support workers are available across Warwickshire to listen, support and offer advice and guidance to families and professionals.

To speak to a family support worker over the telephone, call 01926 414144 option 1, then option 2, Monday to Friday between 9am – 4pm

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/children-families/service-changes-children-families/2

Warwickshire Refuge

If you are experiencing domestic abuse of any kind in Warwickshire, Refuge's regional Domestic Violence and Abuse Service can support you and your children to keep safe.

Call Refuge's Domestic Violence and Abuse Service Warwickshire Helpline on 0800 408 1552 (Monday-Friday 8:30am-8:30pm) to speak to one of our support workers.

www.refuge.org.uk

Worried about your mental health?

Wellbeing for Warwickshire is 'joined-up' support service for adult mental health that can meet a number of needs in a way, and a time and a place, that suits people best. For ease of use, the service has a single phone number **0800 616171** and a single website address

www.wellbeingforwarwickshire.org.uk and these are available for Warwickshire residents 24/7, 365 days a year.

Worried a child is at risk of significant harm?

If you have concerns that a child is suffering ANY form of neglect, abuse or cruelty, contact Family Connect immediately on 01926 414144.

Lines are open from: Monday to Thursday: 8.30am – 5.30pm Friday: 8.30am – 5pm

Out of hours

If you have an emergency outside of usual office hours, please contact the emergency duty team immediately on 01926 886922.

Emergency contact

If you think that a child is at immediate risk, contact the police immediately on 999.



There is always someone that can

HELP



During the Christmas holidays the **Safeguarding team** want to remind you that support is available



Childline

You can talk to us about anything. No problem is too big or too small.

Telephone 0800 1111



Runaway Helpline

If you are thinking about running away, if you have already run away, or if you have been away and come back. You can also contact the Helpline if you are worried that someone else is going to run away or if they are being treated badly or abused.

Telephone 116 000 **www.runawayhelpline.org.uk**



Samaritans

24hr service offering emotional support.

Telephone 116 123 **Email joesamaritans.org**



Look Ahead

Works with vulnerable people throughout the UK, those with learning difficulties, mental health, young people and the homeless.

Telephone 0333 010 4600 **www.lookahead.org.uk/**



Stay safe young minds

If you feel overwhelmed, or like you want to hurt yourself, support is available for you to talk things through. You deserve help as soon as you need it.

Telephone 0800 068 4141 **Text 85258**



Kooth

Safe, anonymous online community and counselling for young people

Kooth.com



SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe
Secondary | December 2025



Stowe Valley
HEALTH & CARE TRUST
EMPOWERING & CHILD PROTECTION

In this issue:

- New devices, new apps
- Personal safety

As teenagers gain independence, their online lives grow more complex - they use social media, messaging and chat apps to connect, express themselves and build friendships or relationships. These platforms can be positive but also bring risks like exposure to adult content, grooming, harassment and pressure to overshare. The following summaries highlight popular apps and what parents and carers should know in order to guide their children safely online.



What it is?

A massive forum-style site where users discuss almost any topic imaginable in themed communities called Subreddits.

What are the risks?

Many Subreddits include adult or explicit content. Some discussions can normalise harmful behaviour and anonymity may encourage bullying or misinformation.



What it is?

Apps that connect users with strangers around the world via random video or text chats. Omegle itself has been shut down, but many copycat apps exist.

What are the risks?

Omegle/
OmeTV:

High risk of exposure to nudity, sexual behaviour and predatory adults. Conversations are often unmoderated and users can record or screenshot without consent.



What it is?

A messaging app with encrypted chats, large group channels and file-sharing.

What are the risks?

Encrypted chats make it difficult for authorities to track harmful or illegal content. Young people may encounter extremist groups, scams or explicit material.

Telegram



What it is?

An app that connects Snapchat users, allowing them to add new friends based on profiles and photos.

What are the risks?

It functions much like a teen dating or 'friendship' app, with swiping and photo-based profiles. Fake accounts, catfishing and inappropriate contact are common.

Hoop



What it is?

An AI chatbot available on the social platform X (formerly Twitter), designed to provide conversational answers and interact in a humorous, opinionated tone.

What are the risks?

Can produce misleading or inappropriate responses. X itself also exposes users to hate speech, adult content and unverified information.

Grok

Parents and carers can stay involved in their child's online life by keeping communication open and showing genuine interest in what they enjoy online. Setting shared expectations around screen time and privacy builds cooperation rather than conflict, while modelling healthy tech habits shows balance in action. Focusing on values like respect and responsibility helps young people think beyond safety to how they treat others and protect themselves. By staying informed about new apps and trends, parents and carers can guide their child through the digital world with understanding and trust instead of control.

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Personal safety for young people

As the dark nights have drawn in, young people learning how to stay safe in public becomes essential. Independence is an exciting part of growing up, but it also comes with responsibility. Knowing how to plan ahead, stay alert and act confidently can make a big difference in keeping themselves and their friends safe.

How parents and carers can support their child's independence

As teenagers begin to explore the world on their own, it's natural for parents and carers to feel both proud and worried. The goal isn't to remove all risk, but to help young people develop the judgement and confidence to handle challenges when they arise.

Start with trust: Let your child know you believe in their ability to make good decisions - that trust helps them take safety seriously.

Talk, don't lecture: Regular, calm conversations about plans, transport and what to do if something changes are more effective than strict rules.

Agree on check-ins: A quick text when they arrive somewhere or when plans change can give peace of mind without feeling like surveillance.

Teach problem-solving: Discuss realistic 'what if' scenarios - like a phone running out of battery or being separated from friends - and how to handle them safely.

Celebrate responsible choices: Acknowledge when your child shows good judgement or communicates well; it reinforces independence and responsibility.

Growing independence is one of the most rewarding parts of the teenage years - for both young people and their parents and carers. Learning to move confidently through the world, make good decisions and manage risks is a vital step toward adulthood. When teens understand how to stay aware and look out for one another and when parents and carers provide calm, steady support, everyone feels more secure. Personal safety isn't about fear - it's about empowerment, awareness and building the skills that help young people thrive wherever life takes them.



SHARE THESE TIPS WITH YOUR CHILD TO SUPPORT THEIR INDEPENDENCE:

01



PLAN AHEAD

Let someone know where you're going, who you're with and when you'll be back. Have a backup plan for getting home safely if your original arrangements change.

02



STICK TOGETHER

There's safety in numbers. Encourage friends to look out for one another and avoid leaving anyone alone, especially at night or in unfamiliar places.

03



STAY AWARE OF SURROUNDINGS

Keep headphones off or low and phones out of sight. Trust your instincts - if something feels off, go somewhere safe, like a shop or busy street.

04



USE TRANSPORT WISELY

Wait for buses or trains in well-lit areas, sit near the driver or other passengers and do not accept lifts from people you don't know well or trust completely.

05



KEEP PERSONAL ITEMS SECURE

Carry only what you need, keep bags zipped and don't flash valuables in public. Be cautious when using ATMs or sharing location information online.

06



KNOW HOW TO GET HELP

Save emergency numbers in your phone and know where to find help locally - a trusted adult, shop staff or public transport worker. If you ever feel unsafe, seek help immediately.



Stop Smoking / Vaping

Getting expert support from a free stop smoking service makes you three times more likely to quit for good! With guidance and encouragement from your own stop smoking advisor, you'll have the support you need every step of the way.

Whether this is the first time you try and quit, or if quitting has been tough in the past now is the perfect time to try!

What's on offer

- Available to anyone aged 12+ who lives, works, studies in Warwickshire, or is registered with a Warwickshire GP.
- 12 weeks of free one-to-one or group support delivered by qualified specialist stop smoking practitioners
- Expert guidance to manage cravings and withdrawal symptoms-
- Free Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), Vape Quit Kits (18+ only) or Medication (18+ only)
- You can now receive full support to quit smoking through the enhanced Smoke Free App
- Stop vaping support

[Stop Smoking Self-Referral - Fitter Futures Warwickshire](#)

