Online Safety @ The Portsmouth Grammar School

At The Portsmouth Grammar School (PGS), online safety is of paramount importance. In an increasingly complex digital landscape, where opportunities and risks coexist, our approach is to both protect and educate our pupils. We aim not only to keep children safe online but also to empower them to make the most of the digital world—for their education, social development, and wellbeing. We are really proud of our online safety provision, and we were pleased that this was recognised in June 2025 when we were awarded the 360 degree Online Safety mark for the third consecutive time. This was awarded by SWGfL, following a comprehensive assessment of our online safety provision.

A Twofold Approach: Protection and Education

Our online safety provision is built on two pillars:

1. Robust safeguarding systems that protect pupils from harmful content and inappropriate contact.

2. Comprehensive education that equips pupils with the knowledge and confidence to navigate the online world responsibly.

Filtering and Monitoring

PGS employs industry-leading tools to ensure a secure online network within school:

- WatchGuard provides our internet filtering system, blocking access to inappropriate or harmful content.

- Lightspeed Solutions offers advanced monitoring capabilities, allowing us to identify and respond to concerning online behaviours.

Both systems are accredited by the UK Safer Internet Centre, ensuring they meet rigorous standards for digital safeguarding.

Supporting Families at Home

We recognise that online safety extends beyond the school gates. That's why we offer free access to a digital safeguarding tool for all parents of children in Years 3–11. This tool can be installed on up to five devices per child and provides:

- Enterprise-grade threat protection

- Optional age-appropriate policies for safer browsing and screen time management

These policies have been developed in partnership with Schoolsmobile, tailored to the needs of our pupils at PGS and their families.

Mobile Phone Use

Our mobile phone policy is clearly outlined in our Online Safety Policy and is designed to promote responsible use:

- Junior School: Phones, for those who travel independently, are handed in to the school office on arrival and collected at the end of the day.

- Years 7 & 8: Phones are handed to the duty staff member in the Middle School Common Room and collected at the end of the day.

- Years 9–11: Phones must be kept in lockers. If used without permission, they are confiscated and held at Main Reception.

- Years 12 & 13: Phones may be kept on their person but used only in the Sixth Form Café during designated times.

Curriculum Integration

Online safety is embedded throughout our curriculum, from the Junior School to the Senior School, ensuring age-appropriate learning at every stage.

Junior School Computing Curriculum

- Year 1–2: Safe use of technology, keeping personal information private, and knowing where to seek help.

- Year 3–4: Responsible use, recognising acceptable/unacceptable behaviour, and reporting concerns.

- Years 5–6: Confident and responsible use of ICT, including understanding online risks and how to manage them.

Junior School PSHE Curriculum

- Year 3: Telling a trusted adult, understanding what keeps us safe online.

- Year 4: Spotting scams, dealing with peer pressure, knowing who to ask for help.

- Year 5: Managing online friendships, understanding safe sharing, financial decisions in gaming.

- Year 6: Screen time balance, recognising unsafe content, evaluating online reliability, fake news, and age ratings.

Senior School Curriculum

Online safety is taught in Computing lessons up to Year 8 and is embedded within our Pastoral Curriculum from Year 7 – Year 11:

- Year 7: Healthy friendships and online behaviours; discrimination and prejudice online.

- Year 8: Online relationships, sexting, grooming, fraud, and conspiracy theories.

- Year 9: Consent and online pornography; gambling addiction.

- Year 10: Body image and distorted online content; online radicalisation.

- Year 11: Online dating, coercive control, and financial literacy.

Assemblies and Whole-School Engagement

Online safety is also regularly addressed in assemblies and whole-school events. This week is Online Safety Week at PGS and, in the Junior School Y3-6 Assembly we discussed gaming usage, night usage and ages for social media apps. In the Senior School, we welcomed Hampshire Police Officers into school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday to speak to all year groups.   Their sessions focused on:

- Discrimination online and the law

- The law around producing, distributing and possessing indecent images

- Online fraud and scams and the importance of privacy settings

These assemblies are a vital part of our commitment to ensuring pupils hear directly from experts and understand the real-world implications of their online actions. They also emphasise that the police are not looking to criminalise children but that online misconduct will be investigated.

Artificial Intelligence: Smart Tech, Safe Choices

As AI becomes increasingly embedded in everyday life, PGS is committed to helping pupils maximise its potential safely and responsibly. We are undertaking extensive work on AI, including:

- Curriculum integration to explore how AI can support learning and creativity.

- Critical discussions around ethical use, bias, misinformation, and digital footprints.

- Education around the safeguarding risks associated with AI

- Development of a new AI policy, designed to guide safe and responsible use of AI tools across the school community.

This work will culminate in our celebration of Safer Internet Day on 10th February 2026, where the theme is: "Smart tech, safe choices – Exploring the safe and responsible use of AI". This will be a whole-school event, engaging pupils, staff, and families in conversations about how to use AI wisely, creatively, and safely.

At PGS, we are committed to creating a safe, supportive, and informed digital environment for all our pupils. Through strong systems, clear policies, and a rich educational programme, we help our students become confident digital citizens—ready to thrive in the online world.