

St Mark's Catholic School

Safeguarding Bulletin



Issue 144 - 25th September 2026

Our students have now completed their first three weeks of the autumn term. Timetables are established, routines are embedded, and students are settling into their new year groups and classes. Now that the initial "back-to-school" excitement has passed, early pastoral trends, friendship shifts, and online habits begin to surface.

Spotting Early Pastoral Trends at Home

After three weeks back, subtle shifts in your child's baseline routine can provide important early indicators of their wellbeing:

School Avoidance & Attendance:

Morning reluctance, sudden anxiety about arriving on time, or frequent visits to the medical room often signal underlying academic stress, friendship worries, or fatigue.

Friendship Shifts: Reorganised teaching groups or tutor forms can lead to changing social dynamics. Look out for sudden withdrawal, distress going to school, or reluctance to socialise over weekends.

Academic & Energy Fatigue: As the initial term momentum slows, fatigue sets in. Watch for extreme irritability, low mood, or sudden shifts in sleep patterns.

Parent Action: If you notice any of these signs, please contact your child's Form Tutor or PPL early. Small, timely adjustments prevent minor worries from escalating.

Online Safety:

School Policy Reminder: Large Group Chats Are Not Permitted

St Mark's does not support or permit student involvement in large, unmonitored class or year-group chats (e.g., WhatsApp or Snapchat groups containing dozens of peers). These spaces frequently lead to group-chat exclusion, rapid escalation of peer conflict, late-night notifications, and inappropriate content sharing.

Current Baseline Age Limits: Most major social media platforms (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, Discord) carry a strict minimum age requirement of 13. **WhatsApp explicitly specifies a minimum age of 16** in the UK and Europe. Children under these baseline ages should not hold active accounts.

UK Statutory Changes (Spring 2027): Under updated government legislation following the Online Safety framework, social media platforms will be prohibited from offering services to children under 16 from Spring 2027. Establishing healthy digital boundaries at home now will support your child through these upcoming statutory changes.

Parent Action: Please check your child's phone. We ask parents to actively remove children from large class/year group chats and ensure active apps align with statutory age limits.

How Your Child Can Access Support at School

We regularly remind students across assemblies, tutor time and through Google Classroom that they never have to carry worries alone. Please reinforce these access points at home:

Trusted Adults: Speaking directly to their Form Tutor, PPL, subject teachers, members of the Safeguarding Team or any member of staff they feel comfortable with.

St. Mark's Support Hub- On-line Reporting: Logging worries, bullying, or peer harm confidentially via our student digital portal-linked on year group Google Classrooms.

WHY REPORT?

We all face challenges sometimes. Talking about issues early can make a big difference.

- ✓ Get the right support before things get worse
- ✓ Help keep you and others safe
- ✓ Make our school a better place for everyone

TALK TO SOMEONE IN SCHOOL

A TEACHER



YOUR FORM TUTOR



YOUR PPL



A MEMBER OF THE
SAFEGUARDING TEAM



HOW TO REPORT (if you are unable to talk)



"Asking for help is a strength, not a weakness".