



# St Benedict's Catholic High School

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Campus Whitehaven, Red Lonning, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 8UG

Head Teacher: Emma Jackson

Dear Parents and Carers,

## **Online Safety: Social Media Influencers**

I am writing to you to make you aware of a growing concern. Some of our pupils' views and opinions appear to be being shaped by online social media influencers.

There are several adults who are trying to build online platforms to become 'celebrities' in this ever increasing online world. These people are portraying themselves as highly successful individuals. They are very vocal about a variety of issues on social media sites such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitch and YouTube to name but a few. Opinions given on these platforms are often very strong and are targeted at influencing debate and mindsets of young people.

One example that school would like you to be aware of is the online personality of Andrew Tate. Whilst some of Andrew Tate's posts appear to focus on wellbeing and mental health, they also include deeply misogynistic (a feeling of hate or dislike towards women), sexist, homophobic, and violent material. Andrew Tate does not represent a positive role model. His content and posts have been removed and banned from many social media platforms. However, some content may still be accessible by young people with a TikTok account or via an internet search.

We want all our pupils to understand the merits of free speech but also understand that just because something has been posted online doesn't make it appropriate or factual. Especially, when shared views depict topics such as misogyny.

At St. Benedict's, we uphold the most stringent online safeguarding with our filtering and monitoring procedures. We do not permit pupils to access inappropriate content. However, children are able to access much of this content at home on their own devices. I have attached some information posters to help you in understanding your role as parents/carers, to support your child/ children with this at home.

I hope that you find this information useful, and should you have any further questions do not hesitate to contact school.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Jack T Crosthwaite  
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Teacher of Computer Science



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# What you need to know about... GAMING STREAMERS & INFLUENCERS



## What are they?

### 'Gaming Streamers & Influencers'

Streamers are people who stream themselves gaming, drawing, making things etc. for people to watch on the internet. Usually this will be done live, and others are able to chat with them in real time while they do so. Influencers are social media stars who hold influence over the people that follow them. Like a kind of trend-setter or taste-maker, who companies often pay to promote their products. A streamer could also be considered an influencer in their chosen area.

## Know the Risks

### Adult Content

Many streamers use platforms such as Twitch or YouTube to broadcast themselves. YouTube for example, is only for ages 13+ (YouTube Kids is for under-13s) and may contain a lot of other adult content. Streamers themselves, may be unsuitable for younger audiences with the kind of content they make, and with many opting to stream live, anything can – and does – happen.

### Authenticity Risk

A lot of streamers will have some kind of sponsorship deal in place with a company trying to sell their products to an audience. When the audience is mostly younger viewers, they may not realise that streamers are getting paid to promote a product and may not be able to have their best interests in mind.

### Bullying and hate

While some streamers do employ moderators to try and control bad comments or bullying in their chat sections, they can still be very heated. Hateful language is quite common, and people looking to groom children, or engage in online bullying behaviour, could frequent the live chats.

### Subscriptions

Streamers also make money through subscriptions on websites like Twitch, where fans will donate them a small amount as little as 1p or as often as they like, called 'bits'. They can be bought in bundles of varying prices which can be gifted to streamers via chat. Children could buy these 'bits' in large amounts without realising what they're doing, leaving a big bill behind.

## Safety Tips

### Discuss what's real online

Be sure to teach kids the difference between what's real and honest, or fake and untrustworthy online. Photoshopping fake images and videos and bragging about themselves online is unfortunately quite commonplace so it is difficult to tell what is real or fake. People with large followings can be promoting unhealthy or unsustainable lifestyles to children to boost their own online influence.

### Use Filters

There are filters that can be put in place to block out a lot of adult content on streaming sites. Just make sure you have access to children's accounts so you can set the parameters and keep track of what they're seeing yourself. Usually, parental controls will be located in the settings portion of an account's menu.

### Check age settings

Both YouTube and Twitch state that they are not suitable for children under 13 years old, but other sites might be different. YouTube Kids, for example, is for ages 13 and under, and offers much of the same kid-friendly content that YouTube does without the risk of running into something improper.

### Affiliate links

Keep an eye out for affiliate links in social media posts and tags like #ad. UK influencers have to follow the CAP Code for advertising standards, but many don't. It can be hard to tell who is working through legitimate channels because it's almost impossible to regulate. Many streamers encourage fans to buy merchandise through online shops and stores.

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LIVE

## Action & Support

### Name check streamers

If your child has begun showing an interest in a streamer or influencer, check their names on Google. Some popular streamers have been discovered flouting industry regulations and using their young audiences to enhance their personal wealth through scams whilst others may swear on streams or promote drinking, substance abuse or links to gambling sites they operate to their young audiences.

### Talk to your child

Initiate an open dialogue with your child about the kind of content they're consuming online. Ask about their favourite streamers and whether they like their personalities or the games they play and the community they have. Also remind them about what they should and shouldn't be sharing about themselves online and that just because social media stars do it, it can also be damaging.

### Block and report

If you suspect a streamer might be taking advantage of their audience, or worse grooming children in any way, and have irrefutable evidence, do not hesitate to block and report them. First, block your child from being able to view their content and alert other parents to your concerns. Go immediately to the police or local authorities with the evidence of what you've seen.

## Our Expert Mark Foster



Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.