



SAFEGUARDING SPOTLIGHT

1st October 2026 - Edition 1

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Welcome Back from the RGS Safeguarding Team!

As we begin another exciting school year, we would like to extend a warm welcome to all students, parents and carers, and especially to those families joining the Rochester Grammar School community for the first time.

This year, we are pleased to introduce a new termly Safeguarding Newsletter for parents and carers. Whilst our regular Spotlight newsletter will continue to celebrate the many achievements, events and successes that take place across our school community, this dedicated safeguarding publication will focus specifically on information, advice and guidance to help keep our young people safe, healthy and well. At Rochester Grammar School, safeguarding remains at the heart of everything we do. We know that children and young people can face a range of challenges both in and beyond school, and we are committed to working in partnership with families to ensure every student feels safe, supported and able to achieve their full potential.

We also recognise that families are often the first to notice when something may be affecting a child's wellbeing. Whether concerns relate to attendance, friendships, emotional wellbeing, online safety, mental health, family circumstances or wider safeguarding matters, we encourage parents and carers to share concerns with us as early as possible. Early communication often allows us to put support in place quickly and effectively.

For many day-to-day matters, your child's Form Tutor or Head of Year is the best first point of contact. Heads of Year know their year groups well and play a key role in supporting students and families throughout their school journey. They work closely with the wider pastoral and safeguarding teams to ensure that appropriate support is available when needed.

Where concerns relate to a student's safety or welfare, our dedicated Safeguarding Team is also available to offer advice and support. No concern is too small to share. If something does not feel right, or if you are worried about any aspect of a young person's wellbeing, we would much rather hear about it so that we can work together to help.

By maintaining strong relationships between school and home, we can continue to create a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment where every student can flourish.

Thank you for your continued support, and we wish all of our students and families a happy, successful and rewarding academic year ahead.
The Rochester Grammar School Safeguarding Team

RGS Designated Safeguarding Lead



Mr D Lloyd
Assistant Principal

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads:

Ms Esmonde - Head of Year 7 and SENCO
Mr Dansie - Head of Year 8
Miss Bourke - Head of Year 9
Mrs Hutton - Head of Year 10
Miss Heathcote - Head of Year 11
Mrs Bailey - Head of Year 12 and 13
Mrs Guerin-Hassett - Student Wellbeing Manager
Mrs Winder - Attendance Improvement Co-Ordinator

Mrs Brinklow - Principal
Mrs Wadey - Vice Principal - KS3
Mrs Hemming - Assistant Principal - KS5
Miss Lee - Associate Leader - Behaviour and Attitudes

To contact any member of the safeguarding team, either contact the main school office, email via individual school emails or by using safeguarding@rochestergrammar.org.uk



Medway Children's Services

☎ 01634 334466 (Monday to Friday)
☎ 03000 419191 (Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team)

RGS Safeguarding Policy

A reminder that our full safeguarding policy can be located on our school website.



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Supporting Children Through Positive Parenting

At Rochester Grammar School, we recognise that parenting can be both rewarding and challenging. Every parent or carer wants the best for their child, and there may be times when managing behaviour feels difficult. We hope this information helps to clarify the law relating to physical chastisement of children and signposts families to sources of advice and support.

What is Physical Chastisement?

Physical chastisement, sometimes known as smacking, spanking or physical punishment, involves using physical force as a form of discipline. This is different from actions taken to keep a child safe, such as preventing them from running into danger.

What Does the Law Say?

In England, parents and carers may still be able to rely on a limited legal defence of "reasonable punishment" in certain circumstances. However, this defence is restricted and does not apply where a child suffers significant injury or harm. Serious assaults against children remain criminal offences.

Why Are Positive Approaches Encouraged?

Research suggests that physical punishment is not an effective long-term behaviour management strategy and may negatively affect children's emotional wellbeing, mental health and relationships. Positive, consistent and nurturing approaches are widely recommended to help children develop self-discipline and resilience.

Positive Alternatives Include:

- ✓ Praise and encouragement
- ✓ Clear and consistent boundaries
- ✓ Calm conversations about behaviour
- ✓ Natural and logical consequences
- ✓ Modelling respectful behaviour
- ✓ Allowing time for emotions to settle before discussing incidents



How the School Responds to Safeguarding Concerns

As part of our safeguarding responsibilities, the school has a duty to consider the welfare and safety of all children.

Where a child discloses physical chastisement, or where staff become concerned that a child may have experienced physical punishment that could place them at risk of harm, the school may need to seek advice from, or make a referral to, Medway Children's Services and/or other safeguarding agencies. This is not about assigning blame. Rather, it is about ensuring that children and families receive the right support at the right time and that any safeguarding concerns are appropriately considered.

Our approach is always child-centred, supportive and focused on the wellbeing of the child.

A Final Thought

Parenting does not come with a handbook, and all families experience challenges from time to time. Seeking support is a positive step and a sign of strength. By working together, families, schools and support services can help ensure that every child feels safe, valued and able to thrive.

Medway Council Early Help

Support available for families experiencing difficulties:
<https://www.medway.gov.uk/earlyhelp>

Family Lives

Parenting support and advice: <https://www.familylives.org.uk>

NSPCC

Advice and support for parents and carers: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/>
NSPCC Helpline: 0800 800 5000



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Understanding your child's Digital Footprint

Everything we do online leaves a trail. Photos, comments, videos, messages, gaming interactions and social media activity can all form part of our digital footprint. Even when content is deleted, screenshots and shared copies can mean that information remains accessible long after it was originally posted.

What Should Parents Be Talking About?

Encourage your child to consider:

Would I be happy for a future employer or university to see this?

Would I say this face-to-face?

Am I sharing too much personal information?

Do I know who can view this content?

Could this post upset or harm someone else?



Top Tips for Families

- ✓ Regularly review privacy settings.
- ✓ Discuss social media use openly and without judgement.
- ✓ Encourage children to think before posting.
- ✓ Remind young people never to share passwords.
- ✓ Talk about what to do if they see something online that worries them.
- ✓ Encourage children to speak to a trusted adult if they experience online bullying or pressure.

How School Can Help

At Rochester Grammar School, students receive online safety education through assemblies, tutor programmes and the curriculum. Parents who have concerns about their child's online activity or wellbeing are encouraged to contact their child's Head of Year or a member of the Safeguarding Team.

The UK Government has been exploring stronger measures to protect children and young people online, including proposals that could restrict social media access for under-18s from March 2027. While the details of any future changes are still developing, families can begin preparing now by encouraging healthy digital habits and open conversations about online life.

Social media plays an important role in how many young people communicate, learn and maintain friendships. If restrictions are introduced, some children may experience frustration, anxiety or concerns about feeling disconnected from their peers. Parents can help by acknowledging these feelings and discussing the reasons behind efforts to improve online safety and wellbeing.

Families may wish to:

Encourage a balanced approach to technology, including hobbies, sports, reading and face-to-face social opportunities.

Talk regularly about how social media affects mood, self-esteem and sleep.

Help young people develop critical thinking skills when engaging with online content.

Explore alternative ways of staying connected with friends and family.

Model healthy technology use within the home.

Most importantly, keep communication open. Young people are more likely to seek support when they feel listened to rather than judged. By having regular, positive conversations about the benefits and challenges of life online, parents can help their children build the resilience and digital skills they will need both now and in the future.

As a school, we will continue to monitor developments and provide information and guidance to families as the national picture becomes clearer. Together, we can help our young people navigate online spaces safely, responsibly and confidently.