Safeguarding at GWJS

Our school Designated Safeguarding Leads are:

Mrs Petchey, Mrs Stolworthy, Mrs Greenwood, Mrs Derer,

Please speak to one of these members of staff if you are worried or concerned about the safety of a child.

If you have a safeguarding concern about a child out of school hours, the number to ring is:

CADS – Children's Advice and Duty Service – 0344 800 8020

Mrs Derer our school Parent Support Advisor or SLT are on our school playground every morning from 8:45am. Mrs Derer our school Parent Support Advisor is on our playground every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday morning from 8:45am.

Mrs Derer and SLT are always happy to talk to you about any worries or concerns relating to your child at home or any further support we may be able to offer or signpost you to.

ONLINE SAFETY

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

LOOKSMAXXING

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Looksmaxxing is an online trend focused on improving one's physical appearance, particularly among boys and young men. At the milder end, it can involve grooming, skincare, diet and exercise advice, sometimes called "softmaxxing". At its extremes, or "hardmaxxing", it can promote unproven or dangerous practices and contribute to body image concerns, low self-worth, and mental health difficulties.

TARGETING MALE INSECURITIES

Although usually aimed at men, looksmaxxing can also reach boys by promising to improve their appearance and dating success. Forums offer 'objective', and sometimes brutal, views on attractiveness, while influencers may make appearance seem all-important. Advice ranges from useful tips on hygiene, skincare, and fashion to more concerning guidance.

DUBIOUS ADVICE

Some advice moves into dubious territory. One example is "mewing", a tongue exercise claimed to create a more masculine jawline. The American Association of Orthodontists says evidence for its effectiveness is limited and warns that following such guidance could contribute to tooth alignment problems, bite issues, and speech difficulties.

EXTREME REMEDIES

Some DIY remedies are even more extreme and potentially dangerous. While fears of "bonesmashing" – which involves trying to alter the cheekbones using blunt objects for a more 'masculine' appearance – may sometimes be overstated in the media, other guidance can also cause harm. Untrained use of microneedling and derma rollers, taking substances or medication without appropriate medical guidance, and overusing skincare products can all have potentially harmful consequences.

BODY IMAGE ISSUES

This pursuit of physical perfection can become obsessive and contribute to serious body image issues. Exposure to looksmaxxing content can encourage teenagers to tie their appearance to their value and self-worth, as well as making boys and young men feel they need to change perfectly normal aspects of their appearance. This can be associated with disordered eating, overexercising, or other obsessive behaviours that interfere with everyday life.

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

As well as the physical consequences, body image concerns can be associated with mental health difficulties, such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, body dysmorphic disorder, and psychological distress. They can cause problems both at school and at home, with children and young people potentially avoiding social situations because they fear their appearance will be negatively judged by others.

A PATHWAY TO EXTREMES

Looksmaxxing has its roots in online 'incel' communities but has since become more mainstream on platforms such as TikTok. Algorithm-driven feeds may show users more extreme material as they interact with similar content. Some looksmaxxing spaces have also been linked with misogynistic, incel, and white supremacist ideologies.

Advice for Parents & Educators

WATCH FOR CHANGES

Keep an eye out for concerning behavioural changes in children and young people. This could include an obsession with diet and exercise, spending more time on social media apps, becoming secretive with their phone, or a shift in how they interact with friends and family. If a young person suddenly becomes distressed by their appearance or adopts rigid or extreme routines, try to understand what may be behind the change.

CHECK THE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media algorithms are tailored to each user, meaning what appears on your feeds may be dramatically different from what children see on theirs. Try to get an idea of the content children and young people are consuming online, and use available parental controls where appropriate. TikTok, for example, provides tools that can help families manage or filter certain types of content.

LISTEN FOR THE LINGO

Like many internet communities, looksmaxxing groups and influencers use distinctive language. As well as "mewing", mentioned above, you might hear terms such as "Chad" (an attractive male), "foid" (a misogynistic term for a woman), and "mogging" (looking more attractive than someone else). Other examples involve adding "maxxing" to another word, such as "jestermaxxing" (using humour to attract women) and "starvemaxxing" (extreme dieting).

TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN

Open communication can help children and young people recognise misleading influencers and harmful online communities. Discuss unrealistic ideas about appearance and explain that some creators benefit from controversial or extreme content. Talk about the risks of unqualified health advice and how people's insecurities can be exploited online, while making it clear that it's okay to speak openly about any concerns.

Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is a technology journalist who has written for publications including Wired, TechRadar, The Telegraph, The Evening Standard, The Guardian and The New Statesman.



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