

Fake News

Feel free to share your **Gooseberry Alert** content with students, staff and parents.

All that we ask in return (in the spirit of modelling positive digital citizenship) is that you acknowledge **Gooseberry Planet Limited as the source of your advice.**

In the first three months of 2019 Facebook removed **over 2 billion*** fake accounts. Some of these will have been created to spread spam or commit fraud, others will have been part of attempts to spread disinformation in the form of Fake News. Social media enables fake news stories to spread quickly and widely and, as users who share them, we are part of the system that helps them to spread.

* <https://transparency.facebook.com/community-standards-enforcement#fake-accounts>

Gooseberry **Student** 'Information' of the week



The term "**fake news**" can be used in many ways, but we use it here to describe stories that are deliberately untrue or only partially true and intended to mislead. This is sometimes called "**disinformation**". It is not new – disinformation in the form of "**propaganda**" has been used over the centuries, particularly in war time. Social media, however, has enabled fake news to spread quickly and widely, making it a much bigger issue than previously.

Think about why people (or governments) might produce fake news. (*Sometimes to influence politics, to sow discord amongst communities or simply to make money*). What techniques might they use to help spread their stories? (*think about the type of language, shock tactics, public figures*). Which digital techniques could make the stories appear more realistic? (*think about digital manipulation of voices, images, backgrounds, websites mimicking reputable news sites*). Why do you think we should be concerned about fake news? (*misleading; divisive; encourages a culture of disbelief, extremism or conspiracy theories; endangers lives eg. disinformation about climate change, vaccines; can damage businesses or individuals eg. false reports of a bank in trouble or a politician committing fraud*). What could you do to help prevent the spread of fake news? (*Be alert, sceptical of unlikely stories, check facts, check sources, don't share*).

Gooseberry **Teacher** 'Opportunity' of the week



Adults tend to have a more cynical view of the world than children and are likely to be more alert to the possibility of fake news but we all need to exercise the same skills that we teach our children – a critical approach to what we see or hear online. Shock tactics are often used to get our attention and encourage us to forward stories. To avoid being part of the fake news problem, we should "think before we share" – Where did the story come from? What are the facts? Is the source reputable? Has it been reported anywhere else? Is it believable? What is it trying to make me think? Why? Should I share it further?

Ongoing technological developments using artificial intelligence to analyse and mimic voices, faces and lip synch speech mean that fake news stories can be backed up with convincing visual images, creating a powerful, almost incontrovertible "truth". This is a real challenge for us and our children.

Gooseberry **Parent** 'Message' of the week



Parents are uniquely well placed to help their children develop a critical approach to what they see and hear online. Over breakfast or walking to school, your child may tell you about a shock story that they have heard online or been sent by a friend. Take the opportunity to explain that not everything they see online is true and that some people try to deliberately mislead us. They may do so to make money out of advertising which follows the number of hits on their site or the motivation may be more political, possibly from foreign powers – encouraging extremist views or attempting to divide society. Alongside a sceptical approach to such stories, it is also important to canvas the different sides of an argument with your child, encourage a questioning approach which considers the facts and respects the views of others.

Want to know more? Visit us at www.gooseberryplanet.com

For Schools who have subscribed to **Gooseberry Games** we recommend students explore:

Ages 5-7 **Playground Scenario 4 – Online fake profiles**

This scenario explores the meaning of “fake”, introduces the concept of being sceptical about the truth of online profiles and other things they see online, encourages the use of critical thinking skills to analyse content and behaviour online.

Ages 8-9 **Street Scenario 10 – Phishing**

This scenario looks at the concept of scams, hoaxes, fake websites and the sort of language used to encourage people to click and share content online. It encourages critical thinking and a sceptical mindset.

Ages 9-10 **Village Scenario 2 – Click Jacking**

This scenario looks at the persuasive, sensational or provocative language used in click jacking. It encourages students not to share such messages. It includes an activity to develop student’s own persuasive messages.

Ages 10-11 **Town Scenario 4 – Part 1 – Extreme Promises**

The scenario introduces the persuasive techniques that people online may use to try to influence behaviour. It encourages a discerning approach, a reflection on the motivation of the messenger, and a questioning attitude. It explores the differences between opinion, fact and belief and encourages respect for other people’s views. It also looks at the warning signs that something may not be true.

Ages 11-12 **Town Scenario 4, Part 2 – Extreme Promises**

This scenario looks at persuasive and manipulative behaviour online in the context of radicalisation. It introduces the fundamental human values, the difference between strongly held and extremist views and the use of persuasive techniques. It looks at how the online environment can be exploited by those promoting extremist views and explores how facts might be checked.