SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

June 2026 | Secondary | What parents need to know about: Looksmaxxing | Attendance

Understanding 'Looksmaxxing'

Many parents and carers know that young people feel pressure about appearance, especially due to social media. The online trend of 'looksmaxxing' is gaining popularity among teenagers.

What is looksmaxxing?

'Looksmaxxing' is a term used to describe attempts to improve physical appearance in order to become more attractive, gain social status or increase popularity online. While some content focuses on relatively harmless habits such as skincare, exercise, sleep or fashion, other areas of the trend can become far more extreme and unhealthy.

Young people may encounter advice encouraging:

- obsessive dieting or exercise
- rigid appearance 'ratings'
- dangerous supplements
- dangerous 'do it yourself' tricks to change facial appearance
- cosmetic surgery
- unhealthy comparisons with others
- beliefs that appearance determines personal value or success.

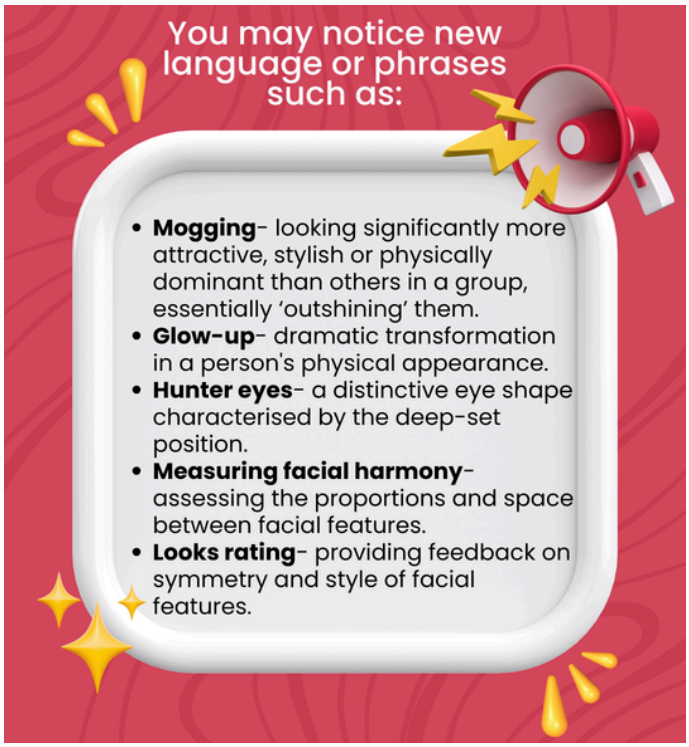
Some online communities linked to looksmaxxing also promote negative attitudes about self-worth, masculinity, relationships and social status.

Where did it come from?

The term originated in online forums and social media spaces focused on self-improvement and appearance. Over time, it spread widely through platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Discord, where short-form videos and algorithms can quickly expose young people to increasingly extreme content.

Many influencers present looksmaxxing as a route to confidence, popularity or success. However, the advice shared is often unregulated, unrealistic, dangerous and designed to generate engagement rather than support wellbeing. One of the most recent trends encourages boys to use a hammer to break their cheek bones in order to shape their face in a particular way.

If parents or carers are concerned about a child's wellbeing, changes in eating habits, excessive focus on appearance or anxiety linked to social media, support from school staff, a GP or mental health services may be helpful.



Talking to your child about looksmaxxing

Open, calm conversations are often more effective than criticism or alarm. Young people are more likely to engage positively when they feel listened to rather than judged.

Some helpful approaches include:

Asking open questions such as:
"What kinds of things are people talking about online at the moment?"

Showing curiosity rather than shock
Staying calm helps children feel safe enough to talk honestly about what they are seeing online.

Discussing how social media algorithms work
They might not realise that apps often show similar content based on their interactions.

Encouraging critical thinking about influencers
Remind children that many online content is edited or created for marketing purposes.

Reinforcing that self-worth is not based on appearance
Reminders that qualities like kindness, effort, humour and resilience matter far more.

Promoting balanced habits for health and wellbeing
Promoting sleep, exercise and hobbies builds confidence more effectively than unrealistic online standards.

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Why school attendance matters

We understand that getting children into school is not always easy. For some young people, worries about friendships, mental health, anxiety, sleep, learning or confidence can make attending school feel difficult. As a school, we want parents and carers to know that we are here to support you.

Why attendance is important

Being in school regularly helps children to:

- keep up with learning
- build confidence
- develop friendships
- feel part of the school community
- prepare for exams and future opportunities.

Missing school can quickly make children feel more worried or overwhelmed. Even a day missed here and there can make it harder to catch up with lessons and friendships. Good attendance is not about being 'perfect'. It is about helping young people stay connected to learning and support.

When attendance becomes difficult

There are many reasons why a child may struggle to attend school, including:

- anxiety or low mood
- friendship issues
- difficulties with learning
- bullying worries
- poor sleep routines
- family pressures or changes
- feeling overwhelmed.

Sometimes children may not clearly explain why they are finding school difficult. You may notice changes such as:

- refusing to get ready
- headaches or stomach aches before school
- changes in mood
- trouble sleeping
- becoming withdrawn or upset.

These behaviours are often signs that a child needs support.

At North Durham Academy, the safety of our students is our top priority. If you require any assistance or support, please reach out to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at d.menear@ndacademy.co.uk or call/text 07818505360.

It can also help to keep communication open by asking:

- *"What feels hardest about school at the moment?"*

This gives children the chance to explain their worries in their own words.

- *"What would help make tomorrow easier?"*

Small changes or support strategies can sometimes make a big difference.

- *"Who in school helps you feel safe and supported?"*

Identifying trusted adults can help children feel more connected and supported in school.