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Teacher warns of thousands of digital interactions reshaping young minds

The Jersey teenager who believes Hitler wasn't real

By Megan Davies

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A JERSEY teenager who believes Adolf Hitler never existed is just one example of how young people in the Island are being dangerously radicalised online, according to a senior teacher who has warned of tech-fuelled harm spiralling out of control.

Patrick Crossley, deputy head at Victoria Col-

lege, said the boy formed his view after watching a YouTube conspiracy video.

"He has been spoken to by people here during the Occupation. He has been taken to the War Tunnels by his parents. His explanation is that those are just a tourist trap, and they're over 50 years old, so we can't know."

"That's just one example."

Speaking during an event at the Town Hall

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“There are probably too many teenagers to count who have seen beheading videos on the internet, pornography of the most extreme variety that simulates and possibly in some cases records rape



■ The cruise ship Hamburg pictured in St Aubin's Bay on an 11-day round trip of the British Isles. Picture: ROB CURRIE (40654652)

Hosepipe ban possible as temperature nears 30°C

By James Jeune

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ISLANDERS are being urged to reduce their water usage amid the hot and dry weather – that could see temperatures of up to 30°C this weekend – with Jersey Water confirming that a temporary hosepipe

ban is a “distinct possibility” this summer.

A spokesperson for Jersey Met said that temperatures had been “building day on day through to the weekend”.

They added that the Island could see 30°C on Saturday or Sunday.

“The winds are generally going to be light and we are going to have sunny con-

ditions,” they continued, adding that Islanders should be aware of the heat and “plan ahead”.

“Think about your own wellbeing, but also your neighbours, the people you look after and your pets.”

This year, Jersey experienced its hottest June day on record, with temperatures

soaring to 33.4°C. The previous hottest June record was 33.2°C on 17 June 2022.

That year, Jersey Water introduced a temporary hosepipe ban that lasted from August to November.

Mark Bowden, the utility company's head of water resilience and emergency

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Meeting focuses on online harms

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focused on online harms on Wednesday evening, Mr Crossley noted that his school's safeguarding team had observed an “increase in certain behaviours and attitudes” since the Covid-19 pandemic.

He added: “There are probably too many teenagers to count who have seen beheading videos on the internet, pornography of the most extreme variety that simulates and possibly in some cases records rape.”

“We have young people at school who got tearful when their parents took their phones away, who need to leave lessons to go and check their phones. We have young people who talk to ChatGPT as a friend, as opposed to a sort of information checker or synthesiser.”

“We've had young people who, when the next iteration of the computer game Call of Duty comes out, we can guarantee they won't be in because they're staying home to play it.”

“It's everywhere, every year group, every friendship group.”

He described these “extreme” examples as the result of thousands of digital interactions that slowly reshape young minds.

A parent of a teenager told the JEP that when they tried to speak to their child

about their phone use, the young person responded: “You just don't understand – none of us want this, none of us know how to stop.”

“We will be known as the ‘lost generation’; we will be known as the generation from when social media became prevalent to when you guys woke up to its damage.”

Multiple parents at the event spoke about how their child had tried to self-harm or take their own lives as a result of either having their phones taken away from them, or because of online bullying.

Meanwhile, occupational practitioner Dr Chris Edmond spoke about the health impact on young people and young adults – from increased demand on mental-health services to increased short-sightedness and young employees who could not concentrate.

Former Channel Island data commissioner Emma Martins said she did not want to engage in “scaremongering” about phones.

Instead, she said that the problem was with social-media companies, and not with the devices themselves or even services like banking being online.

She asked: “What is the business model of Facebook? What is the business model

of WhatsApp? What is the business model of TikTok?”

“We're treated like a natural resource – our time, our attention, our eyeballs are profited from.”

“What is the thing that gets people's attention the most? Violence, sex, generally horrible things. Once it starts, then it spirals.”

“Not all devices are bad; not all tech is bad. We need to be really clear: it's not anti-tech, it's not anti-innovation. But we cannot have innovation without safety.”

The event – organised by Emily Jennings, who is part of the Health Professionals for Safer Screens group – was attended by parents, teachers and a number of politicians, including Sustainable Development Minister Kirsten Morel.

Deputy Morel was asked about the possibility of banning social media until a specific age, following in the footsteps of Australia.

He said that new data protection legislation in preparation was expected to give Jersey's information commissioner the ability to remove content.

Added criminal laws would create an alternative to the UK's Online Safety Bill, he said.

moved by the prior government following a States Assembly proposition. The error is regretted.

Hosepipe ban?

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planning, acknowledged that this was also a “distinct possibility” this summer, with a decision most likely to be made next month.

“It depends on what happens between now and then,” he said.

“If it stays dry, we might make the call sooner, but if we get some rainfall, then we will be in a better position.”

Jersey Water is also preparing to utilise its desalination plant to safeguard supplies. “We have started the process up, but we don't actually get production output from that for several weeks,” Mr Bowden explained.

He highlighted the importance of the utility company's water efficiency campaign.

“We're just looking for customers to minimise their usage as much as possible.”

Mr Bowden pointed out that there were a number of simple steps Islanders could take to achieve this, such as having shorter showers and not leaving the tap running while brushing their teeth.

“A lot of people making small changes can have a huge overall effect,” he added.