

Monday 23rd, November, 2020

Safeguarding updates - Autumn 2020

Dear Parents/ Carers,

I am writing to you to update you on the current issues facing pupils in schools in the context of safeguarding.

We have noticed that pupils are starting to use an app called Omegle. This is particularly dangerous for children to use as it is designed to encourage them to talk to people they do not know (most of whom will be much older than they are). This puts them at risk of exploitation and exacerbates their vulnerability. Please check your child's app use on their phone. In Omegle's written terms and conditions it states that it has a 13+ age restriction and asks users under 18 to only access the site with parental permission/guidance. However, there is no registration process or age verification and so users simply click a button to chat.

Pupils are taught about online safety in PSHE lessons. Please follow this link for further advice and guidance:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/staying-safe-online/>

The main points listed for children are:

- Think before you post
- Don't upload or share anything you wouldn't want your parents, carers, teachers or future employers seeing. Once you post something, you lose control of it, especially if someone else screenshots or shares it.
- Don't share personal details. Keep things like your address, phone number, full name, school and date of birth private, and check what people can see in your privacy settings. Remember that people can use small clues like a school logo in a photo to find out a lot about you.
- Watch out for phishing and scams. Phishing is when someone tries to trick you into giving them information, like your password. Someone might also try to trick you by saying they can make you famous or that they're from a talent agency. Never click links from emails or messages that ask you to log in or share your details, even if you think they might be genuine. If you're asked to log into a website, go to the app or site directly instead.
- Think about who you're talking to. There are lots of ways that people try to trick you into trusting them online. Even if you like and trust someone you've met online, never share personal information with them like your address, full name, or where you go to school. Find out more about grooming.

- Keep your device secure. Make sure that you're keeping your information and device secure. Never give out your password, you should never give out your password or login information. Make sure you pick strong, easy to remember passwords.
- Cover your webcam: Some viruses will let someone access your webcam without you knowing, so make sure you cover your webcam whenever you're not using it.

We have also been informed that pupils are establishing their own private WhatsApp groups. Some are then sharing explicit and upsetting images. Please talk to your child about this to ensure that they are not exposed to age-inappropriate content and that they are using such chat apps responsibly. WhatsApp's stated minimum age limit is 16.

If you have any questions or queries which arise as a result of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact a member of staff to discuss further.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Loten". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

J. W. Loten
Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead