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ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL

Directors: Mrs J Gardiner and Mrs R Smith
Headteacher: Ms S Dangerfield

Thursday 4th May 2023

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you to raise my continuing concerns regarding online safety. Myself, Jo Paffett, Karla King and Karen Berryman have over the past few months supported a number of our families with what could be seen as online grooming (grooming is when someone builds an online relationship with a young person and tricks them or pressures them into doing something sexual).

Our students (male and female) have sent sexually explicit photographs to unknown individuals online. In each case the police have been involved and the young person and their families have had to go through the difficult experience of seeing what has been posted and distributed online and working with the police to try to get these images removed from social media platforms, in some cases these images have been seen by hundreds of individuals.

All children are vulnerable to this behaviour and in recent years the posting of indecent images has become a common issue amongst all young people (starting as early as that young person has access to technology eg a mobile phone, tablet, laptop etc).

Internet Matters CEO, Carolyn Bunting said: "For children who send images and face consequences, the effects can be devastating and can potentially lead to long-term damage to their emotional wellbeing. And as society's most vulnerable are disproportionately likely to send images, it's crucial young people experiencing vulnerabilities are being fully supported by their parents who understand the pressures to send images that some of these children face. Prevention is key here – so it's essential that parents and carers tackle sexting head-on with their child – however awkward they may anticipate the conversation to be – as it's key to keeping them both safe and emotionally healthy."

To try to prevent any other families having to go through this, I would ask you to have conversations with your child about their online activity and to explain why it is important that you regularly check their phones and devices to keep them safe. I would also ask you to remind them that **Under the Protection of Children Act 1978** and the **Criminal Justice Act 1988**, taking, possessing, or sharing sexualised images of any person under the age of 18 is a criminal offence. Finally, please also have discussions about their future and ask them if would they want their future employers to see the sexually explicit photos that they are sending.

As a school we are signed up to National Online Safety Platform which has lots of fabulous videos and information pages to help. Your username is **xxx**

You would have set your password, if you have forgotten this there is a forgotten password section on the website.

As always if you are concerned about any of the information in this letter or anything else please do get in touch and we will support the best we can.

Yours Sincerely

Samantha Dangerfield