COX
GREEN
SCHOOL

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Dear Parent/Carer

Below is a letter that we have been asked by the Police and NSPCC to circulate with all our parents, and that we as a school support, to raise awareness with regards online child abuse.

Police and NSPCC join forces to tackle online child abuse

The internet is a great place for children and young people to socialise, explore their interests and learn. But the online world is constantly changing and it can feel hard to keep up.

Nationally we are seeing a growing number of cases where children and young people have been targeted by adults through popular apps and social media platforms. Online grooming and sexual exploitation are just a couple of examples of crimes that are happening in the heart of our communities, often going undetected or unreported.

That's why, as part of the force's Hidden Harm campaign, Thames Valley Police and the NSPCC have joined forces to raise awareness of online child abuse and equip parents and young people with the tools to stay safe online.

What is online child abuse?

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet, whether through social networks, online gaming or mobile phones. It can take many forms, from young people being persuaded to share sexually explicit images of themselves, to being threatened, intimidated and harassed via the internet.

Any child or young person that uses the internet or has a smartphone could be a victim of online abuse regardless of their age, gender or background. That's why it is really important that we all understand the signs to look out for that could indicate a child is being abused.

Signs of online child abuse

The signs aren't always obvious but there are some you can look out for, for example:

- Spending more time than usual online or on their phone
- Being secretive about what they're doing or who they're talking to
- Hiding computer screens or taking phone calls in rooms away from other people
- Engaging less with family and usual friends
- Sudden personality changes or severe mood swings
- Having new things like phones or clothes that they can't explain

How to keep children safe online

The internet plays a big part in most of our lives so it's important we all understand the risks associated with being online as well as taking simple steps to help keep children safe:

- Understand the types of social media available to children and young people
- Know what your child is doing online and talk to them about it
- Set up and manage parental controls on all your family's devices
- Reassure your child that they can talk to you about anything that is worrying them

Suspect it. Report it.

If you believe a child, you know could be a victim of online abuse tell someone.
Contact the police on 101, or 999 if you believe they are at immediate risk from harm. Alternatively, you can contact the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000 for help and support.

For more information, visit thamesvalley.police.uk/hiddenharm.

Yours sincerely

Mr Ed Hillyard
Deputy Headteacher