



May 2017

RE: Mental Health: E-safety and TV streaming

Dear Parent / Carer

As a Safeguarding Team we are constantly reviewing the support and advice we give to students and families. As you know, the world of social media constantly provides great opportunities but also real and present challenges for students. As you already know from previous letters we have a duty of care for our students and are striving to do all we can to ensure that you are given the latest information to help safeguard our young people. I would like to draw your attention to a number of social media and TV streaming platforms that are currently causing national and local concern.

The Blue Whale Game is played via many social media platforms. It has caused over a hundred deaths in Russia. There is evidence from the police and safeguarding agencies that this is spreading into countries including the UK. Players are given a master who controls them for 50 days and each day they are given a task to complete. One task might be to wake up in the middle of the night and they steadily escalate with another task being for them to scratch a blue whale somewhere on their body. On the 50th day the masters behind the game instruct the young people to commit suicide and sadly across the world some have done this.

We would like to alert you to a new app called Say At Me (sayat.me) which young people are currently downloading to gain anonymous feedback on themselves. It is similar to Ask FM which surfaced a few years ago and it is available as web and android apps. Please be vigilant to the dangers of your child using anonymous apps, because of the possibility of receiving negative comments and the obvious damage to their self-esteem.

Finally, I would like to raise an issue that has surfaced recently regarding TV streaming. There are a number of platforms available, for example Netflix that allow children access to a wide library of material which may not be age or content appropriate. One programme that has caused us concern is '13 Reasons Why'. This is a series based upon a young girl whom leaves 'suicide tapes' each addressed to a different person in her life, detailing how they hurt her and contributed to her death. Although suicide may be deemed an adult topic, our concern is that this could affect a number of our students and it may not be age or content appropriate for your child.

We would be grateful if you could encourage your child not to download or to contribute to such sites and to monitor their use of TV streaming platforms. There is very useful advice on talking to your children about effective use of social media at www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents. Please continue to support us in keeping all our young people safe and the aim of this communication is to raise awareness of some of the issues your child may be exposed to.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Jones
Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead