



Clacton County High School

Walton Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 6DZ
Tel: 01255 424266 e-mail: admin@cchs.school

Higher Expectations, Raising Aspirations

Our reference: STALET15/lh

13th July 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you because there has been a recent increase in reports to the school of children talking to and exchanging pictures and videos with strangers online. Videochat websites and apps like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Omegle and others, allow children to talk and exchange pictures on tablets and Smartphones or via a webcam. Whilst talking on webcam with known and trusted friends and family can be fun and exciting, children can be at risk of bullying and also abuse. Children and young people sharing pictures and videos online are vulnerable to exploitation. This can happen in the following way:

- A perpetrator makes contact with a young person online through an app, chatroom or game.
- The perpetrator begins a conversation and tricks the young person into sending them an indecent picture, appearing naked or performing sexual acts on webcam. They can trick them by pretending to be of the same age, someone the child knows, flirting with them or sending them sexual pictures or videos.
- The offender records or captures the picture. They then threaten to show it to others including family members if they do not perform more sexual acts. They often do this by creating a fake account using captured images.

This has happened to several young people this week. The students concerned have had fake accounts created using names, photographs and video footage that make it appear as though this is a genuine account. This has led some children to believe that the fellow student is at fault. This is not the case and is **sexual abuse caused by the perpetrator**.

I have, today, brought year 7 students together in the gym separated into their class bubbles to discuss with them how to keep themselves safe and how to report a concern. The children have been told very clearly that if this has happened to them that they are not at fault and that they need to report it. They have been asked to delete any inappropriate images or video that they may have been sent and to tell us or home if they are feeling pressured by anyone to send any video or still images.

What to do if this happens over the summer break

Please react calmly and always:

- Believe your child and tell them that you believe them.
- Remind them it is not their fault, the person responsible is the offender.
- Keep calm and talk to your child about how they feel and let them know that you're here to listen.

- Report the concern to Essex Police via the website www.essex.police.uk or use 999 if there is immediate risk to someone's safety.
- You can also report to CEOP, a national agency that tackle exploitation of children and young people. For information, advice and to report concerns directly to CEOP, visit www.ceop.police.uk
- Be aware that offenders may sometimes be targeting and abusing multiple children online. Your child may possibly be one of many victims and reporting online suspicious activity may help protect many children.
- Contact the safeguarding leads at school by emailing admin@cchs.school and putting 'safeguarding' in the subject line.

How to stop it happening

- Set appropriate parental controls and use filters for home computers and other devices.
- Talk to your child about what they are doing online and ask them to show you the apps and sites they use.
- Ensure your child understands how anyone can copy and share images or messages posted online and the importance of keeping their personal information and images safe.
- Ensure that privacy settings and age restrictions are discussed and in place for the websites and apps that your child uses including ensuring that the location connected to your child's phone camera is off.
- Ensure that you and your child know how to block and report unwanted images and messages.
- Ensure you know how to report sexual abuse online.

If you are worried that your child is at risk of harm or a criminal offence has been committed then you can report your concerns Essex police, visit our school website or email our safeguarding leads who will contact you back.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer

Yours sincerely

Sandy Tate
Deputy Headteacher