

Woodkirk Academy

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The Sixth Form @ Woodkirk Academy

Principal: **Mrs J Barton** BMus (Hons) MA NPQH

29 January 2021

Dear Parent

With young people likely to spend more time online due to current lockdown procedures, this presents a number of increased risks. The Children's Society have recently expressed real concern around the increase in young people being groomed online for the purpose of both criminal and financial exploitation. Alongside this, online grooming for the purposes of child sexual exploitation remains an ever present danger. We must also be mindful that young people can be exploited by their peers as well as adults. Further recent comments from the Children's Society are below:

"There has been information about an app called 'Yubo' formerly called 'Yellow' – a joint app with Snapchat used as an online dating app for young people under 18, many refer to it as Tinder for Teens. If a young person doesn't have their privacy settings on high on Snapchat the person they are communicating with on 'Yubo' can have access to their location details and where they have checked in. Another area of concern is an app called 'Saharah' which has been used for cyber bullying and potential grooming. The app is anonymous and encrypted so means that perpetrators of violence can share information with no consequences on there."

The rising activity of online extremists is another huge concern. Many extreme groups will actively seek out young people to exploit and groom via various online platforms – extremists are particularly active on Tik Tok, one of the most popular social networks with our students. Other popular networks are also widely used such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Online gaming is another area of concern with groomers able to interact and chat with young people via PS4/5 and Xbox. The gaming app, DISCORD, is widely used by the right wing in particular. Evidence suggests that young males may be particularly vulnerable to this form of exploitation.

Extremist groups such as Daesh and Al-Qaida remain a particular threat in the UK, but there is also a considerable rise in the Extreme Right Wing's online presence. Following initial contact with a young person, they may well be moved to other areas, such as Private Messaging apps, which are encrypted and very difficult to moderate. This is where young people may be bombarded with horrendous material, with one aim being to de-sensitise them to violence.

There are a number of national organisations exploiting young people but also some based in the West Yorkshire area, and known to be active in Leeds and Dewsbury. If you notice any apps on your son/daughter's phone that you are unsure about, or notice any badges, stickers or emblems that you don't recognise, please get in touch. If we are not able to identify these in school, we can liaise directly with the Leeds Prevent team.

Continued ...

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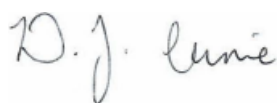
Online Safety Alliance – Parent Course

We currently have membership with the Online Safety Alliance and have access to a free course for parents. Please [click here](#) to view the information leaflet and guide in order to easily access the course. The course is very informative and I would hope it is useful for everyone, particularly those who have limited knowledge of the online world and their son/daughter's online activity.

Finally, we appealed to parents a number of months ago to monitor 'meme' accounts followed by their son/daughter on Instagram. These accounts tend to have 'Woodkirk' and 'meme' in the title and are often used to target teachers and/or students. Other accounts, known as 'shame pages' have recently emerged, used to target and bully other students. At the moment, younger students in school seem to be the main targets. These accounts tend to have 'shame' somewhere in the title. Please check your son/daughter's 'following' list and remove them from these if necessary – after the last appeal to parents, the activity and number of followers dropped considerably but this has risen again, as often, young people will add themselves back to the accounts. Students, or groups of students currently attending Woodkirk Academy, are also likely to be the ones operating the accounts.

Please continue to have open discussions around online safety with your son/daughter in order to keep themselves as safe as possible and recognise potential dangers.

Thank you



Mr D Currie
Designated Safeguarding Lead

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>