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“Valuing every achievement”

Friday 15th December

Dear Parent Carers

Following on from my letter last week around online safety, I unfortunately need to let you know that we have been made aware of another case of grooming.

We are hearing about this more due to the great parenting from you all. For your monitoring of your child's phone/device usage and for reading our letters and information and recognising issues quickly.

I have spoken again to the Police this week and expressed my concern we have had 3 cases of grooming this year. Not all related but concerning that our children and young people are so vulnerable to this behaviour, as they are in other settings, as we have all been talking about this at Heads meetings. There is no blame apportioned to the child or parent carer in these instances as these 'people' are very skilled at ensuring they have the trust of the child before they start with their main aims and then they encourage the children to bypass parental controls, they put pressure on the children through threats and bribes and they manipulate them.

On this occasion the grooming has started through VR headset again. We wrote to you about this earlier in the year. Please ensure you check your child's headset and that their activity on this device is within the sight of yourselves so you can monitor what is happening. If your child's behaviour changes, please consider checking their online activity.

The app DISCORD is one that has been mentioned on two of these incidents with children being 'led in to different rooms' in which groomers are able to start their process. If you are aware that your child uses this, please check their activity.

Children are also more 'tech savvy' than us and so are also using web browsers such as 'Brave' which means their online activity is not tracked and IP addresses are not logged. Your child may say they are using this as it stops 'hackers' from hacking in to their information. This is another



way that others can contact, and your child can search for things or be directed to sites without trace.

A lot of our children are on Fortnite Live. This is another area in which our pupils are incredibly vulnerable. Please check this if your child is active on this platform.

You may have heard from your child that we have had to block You Tube from our devices in school. This was because we had found that pupils could access recorded live chats when they searched for Fortnite and this is wholly inappropriate. This has not gone down well with the pupils and some are even finding 'loopholes' around getting onto You tube!! We have now blocked all web browsers except for Chrome in the building, so even with our firewalls and protection, we are having to be one step ahead as well.

The Police have been very helpful in responding to us and coming in to chat about these cases. We are also still being very well supported by Neil Sharpe who comes in to speak with our pupils. Unfortunately, due to the nature of these crimes, these people are well hidden and so there is not a lot the police can do which is as equally frustrating for them as much as us. All we can do is pass on any information we find so that they can act on this and see if they can investigate further.

As an additional reminder, please check your children's devices on a regular basis. Do not accept that they 'know' all of their 'friends', if you don't recognise a name, the chances are, neither does your child and this is a potential threat to their safety. Look into your child's apps too, as sometimes the frontage of an app hides what is actually inside it.

We shared information earlier this week about a toolkit to keep your children safe online. Please refer to this and put in place anything that you may be missing.

One of the Parents who has been through this, has offered to support anyone who has questions in order to help further, if you would like me to put you in touch with her, please let me know.

One of the many things we do well at Rigby is protecting and looking after each other. Whatever we can do to support, we will. Please do not think you will be judged if you find anything, you will not. Your child will not be in trouble either. We just need to make sure we stop these people getting to our children.

Kind regards



Tracey

Headteacher

