



St Philip Howard
Catholic High School
Specialist Humanities School

December 2015

Dear Parent/Carer

As you may have seen on Channel 4, Monday 7 December, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) has recently warned of a concerning increase in sexual offending on the internet involving webcams. At the St Philip Howard Catholic High School we take your child's online safety very seriously, with regular discussions and training.

As partners with parents and carers in keeping your child safe, we should like to share the following letter, which was written by CEOP, to encourage you to support your child by emphasising:

- Do not add a follower or "friend" on any social media network unless **you know them in person.**
- Always tell an adult you trust if you are being threatened online.
- It is never too late to get help and support if this happens.
- Offenders are committing a serious crime and will be pursued and prosecuted by the police.
- Think before you go on webcam, never do anything which you wouldn't be happy for family or friends to see.
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Webcam abuse

CEOP have investigated a number of cases in which sex offenders have used extortion to force young people to perform sexual acts on webcam.

Typically online sexual extortion happens in the following way:

- An offender makes contact with a young person. This can happen anywhere online, including on a social network, in a chatroom, in a game or even on their mobile.
- The offender begins a conversation and tricks the young person into sending them an indecent picture, appearing naked or performing sexual acts on webcam. They trick them in a variety of ways including: pretending to be a girl or boy of the same age, pretending to be someone the child knows, flirting with them or sending them sexual pictures or videos.
- The offender records the webcam footage. They then threaten to share the video with the young person's friends or family if they don't perform more sexual acts. Some young people have been threatened for money or told to hurt themselves.

This has happened to hundreds, potentially thousands, of young people in this country.

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Headteacher: David Carter

This is sexual abuse. The emotional impact can be devastating. A number of young people have attempted suicide as a result of finding themselves in this situation.

To help prevent further harm, CEOP are calling on parents and carers to talk to their children about this type of crime and to support them to come forward should they find themselves in difficulty.

It's great to take an active interest in your child's life online and we'd encourage you to talk openly with them about the things they do. Remember, the internet is an essential part of young people's lives and provides them with tremendous opportunities. The vast majority use it without coming to any harm.

To start a conversation with your child you could tell them that you understand that some young people share sexual images and that you're interested to know what they think about it.

What to do if this happens

If your child were to tell you this has happened, your response as a parent will be crucial in helping them cope. It is important to take it very seriously whilst reacting calmly. When a child tells a parent they have experienced sexual abuse parents should:

- Believe their child and tell them that they believe them
- Not blame them for the abuse they have suffered.
- Tell them it's not their fault. Even if they have engaged in risky behaviour, the only person responsible is the offender.
- Not display anger or rejection – even if they are feeling these things parents should work through them in a separate place
- Talk to their child about how they feel and let them know that they're here to listen.
- Report to CEOP. CEOP is a command of the National Crime Agency, and is dedicated to tackling the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people. CEOP is here to help young people (up to age 18) who have been forced or tricked into taking part in sexual activity with anyone online or in the real world. For information, advice and to report concerns directly to CEOP, visit www.ceop.police.uk.

If you do have any concerns you can talk to Mrs Ann Careless, Mr David Carter or myself at school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Alison Baker
Assistant Headteacher i/c Community Outreach