Senior Head of School: Mr Paul Arnold
Assistant Head of School: Mr Colin Randall
Assistant Head of School: Mrs Sarah Rama-
Dominguez
Assistant Head of School: Mrs Karen Rust

Beechwood Primary Academy
31 Rockfield Avenue
Southway
Plymouth
PL6 6DX
01752 706360
www.beechwood-primary.co.uk
beechwood.office@discoverymat.co.uk

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am emailing to share some important safeguarding information, which some of you might already be aware of, regarding the recent Netflix programme 'Adolescence'. This TV series has captured the country's attention due to the issues it shares facing young people today, particularly online. Although the programme is based upon secondary school aged children, we cannot assume that the issues shown in the programme, regarding the use of social media, do not get filtered down to younger audiences.

Young people, particularly teenagers, are communicating with each other online in ways that adults might miss. What looks innocent, for example in a text message, could have a much darker meaning. We think that this is important to share this information with you, in order to raise awareness, and as a parent you might decide that you want to talk about this with your child (if and when you feel this is appropriate and depending on their age).

At school, we also recognise the importance of safeguarding our pupils from potentially harmful and inappropriate material online. We educate pupils about online safety, in an age appropriate way, as part of our curriculum, including PSHE and Computing.

For example:

- The safe use of social media, the internet and technology
- Keeping personal information private
- How to recognise unacceptable behaviour online
- How to report any incidents of cyber-bullying, ensuring pupils are encouraged to do so, including where they are a witness rather than a victim

Here are some of the emojis and codes currently being used widely on social media, which may have a darker meaning:

Incel

Incel is defined as: 'men who blame women and society for their lack of romantic relationships,' according to the Anti-Defamation League which works to address hate and extremism.

🔴 Red Pill - "I see the truth." Used in toxic male spaces to mean waking up to supposed hidden 'truths' about women and society, often linked to misogynistic ideologies.

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🔵 Blue Pill - Represents those who are "blind to the truth" or still believe in mainstream views about relationships and gender dynamics.

💥 Dynamite Emoji - An "exploding red pill," meaning someone is a radicalised Incel.

🫘 Kidney Bean - A symbol linked to Incel culture, sometimes mocking women.

💯 100 Emoji - Tied to the "80/20 rule," the belief that 80% of women are only attracted to 20% of men.

⚫ Black Hole - Used to express depression, hopelessness, or being sucked into negative online spaces.

🌪 Tornado - Represents chaos or feeling overwhelmed, sometimes used to indicate mental distress.

🐸 Frog Emoji - Associated with alt-right and extremist meme culture, often linked to Pepe the Frog, which has been co-opted by some toxic online groups.

🦅 Eagle - A symbol of extreme nationalism, sometimes used in far-right online spaces.

💀 Skull - While often just slang for "that's funny" or "I'm dead (from laughing)," in certain groups, it can signal darker themes like nihilism (believing in nothing/lack of loyalties/no purpose) or self-harm.

❤️ 💜 💛 💗 🧡 Heart Colours - Not just about love!

❤️ = Love

💜 = Lust

💛 = "Are you interested?"

💗 = Interested but not in sex

🧡 = "You'll be okay"

So as a parent, what should we do?

Decide whether you think you need to talk to your child about the hidden meanings of emojis being used on social media, based on their age and their exposure to online platforms.

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1. Get Curious, Not Combative – Ask open-ended questions: "I saw something about emojis meaning different things. Have you heard of this?" Keep the conversation light.

2. Create a Judgment-Free Zone – If your child feels like they'll be punished for opening up, they won't. Make it clear you're there to listen, not just lecture.

3. Decode Together – Ask them to explain their digital world. What do different symbols mean? Who are the influencers they follow? Don't assume - ask.

4. Teach Critical Thinking – Help them question online content. "Why do you think some groups push this idea? Who benefits?" Arm them with questions, not just rules.

5. Monitor Without Spying – Open conversations work better than secret surveillance. Make checking in on their online spaces a normal part of parenting, not a crisis move.

6. Be Real About Manipulation – Explain how toxic online groups groom young people by making them feel special, included, or like they have 'insider knowledge.'

7. Build Their Offline Confidence – The more they feel valued and confident in the real world, the less they'll seek validation in dangerous online spaces.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and your ongoing support. We all want to keep our school community as safe as possible, and as we continue to be open and share concerns with each other (at home and in school) we can work together to ensure our young people's safety, health and wellbeing.

If you have any questions, concerns, or would just like to have a chat with regards to the information within this letter then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Mr P Arnold
Senior Head of School