

**CCC Safeguarding**

**Bulletin for Parents**

Dear Parents/Carers,

As a school, safeguarding is at the forefront of everything we do and as such we wanted to further improve the systems we have in place at The Chalfonts Community College by creating a half termly newsletter to support our children and families. This has been designed to provide information about the current trends we’re seeing nationally (as well as locally) and to provide guidance/help to keep our school community safe. Please do let us know what you think and if there’s anything we’ve missed, we’ll try to include it next time.

****

**Self Harm**

There can be few things more shocking and heart-breaking as a parent than discovering that your child is deliberately harming themselves. However, studies suggest that self-harm is reaching epidemic levels among today’s young people and thousands of children and young people in the UK are thought to be impacted by self-harm each year. Spotting the signs can be difficult and approaching the subject with your children can be an uncomfortable experience.

**So, what can parents do to support struggling young people?**

There are several warning signs parents should look out for. Self-harm is often accompanied by other indications that all is not well, including low mood, overly defensive behaviour, problems sleeping and changes in appetite. Covering up with long sleeves and trousers in hot weather can be a cause for concern. However, the most common sites for injury are areas that are usually covered, such as the stomach and thighs. Spots of blood on clothing that comes in to contact with these areas, or on discarded tissues, can be a tell-tale sign.

Self-harming children will need professional help to address their underlying problems, so your first port of call should be your GP, who can refer them to your local child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), as well as direct you to other sources of support in the area. Please do also speak in confidence to the school’s Designated Safeguarding Leads who can help support your child in school; we have school counsellors who can also help.

As parents/carers you might be interested in a free course designed to provide you with a basic awareness of the subject to help you approach your children with confidence about the issue. This "***Talking to your Children about Emotional Resilience and Self-Harm***" course handles the subject of teenage self-harm and parental ways to support your children, in a sensitive and informational way. Designed in partnership with SelfharmUK, the free online course is designed to help parents talk about the issue of self-harm with their children. https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/courses/safeguarding/understanding-young-minds

SelfharmUK also provide free online support for 14- to 19-year-olds. https://www.selfharm.co.uk/

Kooth [www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com) is an online counselling platform teenagers can use and has lots of helpful information. It is free to sign up and safely monitored.

YoungMinds Crisis Messenger is a text service that provides free 24/7 crisis support across the UK. For more information go to <https://youngminds.org.uk>

****

**Squid Game (Netflix)**

There has been a lot of media attention about Netflix's Squid Game. This is currently the most watched show in 90 countries and nearly all episodes of the '15' rated show contain violent and gruesome scenes. Squid Game may be based around classic children’s games – but that does not mean it’s suitable for children**.** For those parents who have not watched this themselves you may wish to monitor if your younger teen is watching this on their own devices. On Netflix, it is rated MA15+ for mature adults, meaning it is legally restricted to people over the age of 15. However, the show has found its way to those far younger, drawing concerns from mental health professionals.

****Common Sense Media, which rates shows, games and films based on age appropriateness, called the violence in the show “very intense”. “Characters are systematically tortured and killed for the sadistic pleasure of a game master. Adults have sex, and there are threats of sexual violence: Women are grabbed by the hair and beaten,” it said. For more information about safety measures please click on the following link: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/

**Vaping and E-Cigarettes**

We want to raise awareness amongst the parental body of the increasing number of children who are being exposed to ‘vaping’ and some as young as years 7 & 8. We have been made aware that many young people across Buckinghamshire are now carrying vapes to school and smoking them; either on school transport or to/from school.

We have also had information passed onto us by the Bucks Exploitation Hub around concerns raised that some children are selling vapes and the possibility of a form of Cannabis being made into a vape (no suggestion that children are selling these) is something schools and parents/carers need to be aware of.

Please talk to you children about the unknown health effects and risks of vaping. The long-term health consequences of vaping are not yet fully known and understood. The vapor contains harmful chemicals and very fine particles that are inhaled into the lungs and exhaled into the environment. Recent studies report serious lung damage in people who vape. Studies show that vaping makes it more likely that someone will try other tobacco products, like regular cigarettes, and addictions in the growing brain may set up pathways for later addiction to other substances.

The sale of tobacco and e-cigarettes to people under the age of 18 is an offence, however sadly the most common way to access both cigarettes and e-cigarettes among 11–17-year-olds is through shop purchases. Clever branding and flavours that mimic sweets make them particularly enticing to teens.

**Cannabis Edibles**

There have been some recent media reporting about 'sweets' laced with cannabis, amongst other things. Edibles are food products that may contain cannabis. There are many forms of edibles, including sweets, gummies and lollipops. They usually contain – or are marketed as containing - a number of chemicals, many of which are harmful and controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) including tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC is the psychoactive compound in cannabis and can make people feel a range of effects. Any CBD product containing THC is illegal in the UK. The sweet versions are widely available on the internet and via social media and may be easily accessed by young people. The packaging is often deliberately targeted to attract young people. There is NO quality control of these products.

**Here are some resources that parents might find useful**:

The Surrey Safeguarding Partnership and Catch-22 have produced this helpful leaflet: Edibles: Information for Parents & Carers https://cdn.catch-22.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/SYPSMS-Edibles-Information-for-Parents.pdf

Ealing Grid for Learning has a ‘toolkit’ about edible cannabis, which includes a powerpoint presentation from the Metropolitan police, here: Safeguarding alert: Edible drugs disguised as sweets https://www.egfl.org.uk/news/2021/03/safeguarding-alert-edible-drugs-disguised-sweets

Another resources is: Cannabis Edibles Information Sheet (SORTED) https://safeguardpro.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Edibles-Info-Sheet-SORTED.pdf



****

**Safety After Dark**

We recently had report of some suspicious behaviour of a man filming students disembarking from one of our school buses. This was reported to Thames Valley Police and has subsequently been followed up by them.

You may also be aware of a serious incident that happened locally last Friday, which resulted in an attack and kidnap of a 16 year old boy from the Loudwater area. The young man was treated in hospital for his injuries, but he has since been discharged. This will of course be a concerning set of circumstances for parents, children and schools. At this stage our colleagues from Thames Valley Police believe this to have been an isolated incident. You can read a statement from Thames Valley Police here: [Appeal for witnesses after boy is kidnapped – High Wycombe | Thames Valley Police](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thamesvalley.police.uk%2Fnews%2Fthames-valley%2Fnews%2F2021%2Foctober%2F25-10-2021%2Fappeal-for-witnesses-after-boy-is-kidnapped--high-wycombe%2F&data=04%7C01%7C%7C7ea01ff7921743eb591a08d99e0fb4a9%7C5969f4eef4524018a4f5fce2e79c67c4%7C0%7C0%7C637714612558586139%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=sj59TeYyzmDCKKI8v92bae0V3fUNWgIVK%2FzLNTM6nBw%3D&reserved=0)

TVP have asked us to remind parents that, while we are likely to have had repeated “stranger danger” talks with them when they were younger these conversations tend to decrease as children get older and yet they are just as critical into and throughout their teenage years.

**Here are some top tips to discuss with them:**

* Always tell an adult (preferably a parent) where you’re heading. That way, if you’re faced with a risky situation, your family and friends will know where to find you.
* Keep your parents/carers updated on any plans that may suddenly change.
* Don’t travel alone. There is safety in numbers.
* Stay on the main routes and avoid shortcuts that take you through isolated areas
* If someone you don’t know or don’t feel comfortable with offers you a ride, say NO.
* If you are approached by an adult for help or for directions, stay alert, as this may be an attempt to draw you in closer. Please keep in mind, adults should ask for help or directions from other adults, not children.
* Be aware of other teenage lures - you may be offered things like alcohol or drugs to get into someone’s car.
* If anyone follows you, bothers you or makes you feel uncomfortable, get away from them as quickly as you can, then be sure to tell a parent, teacher or other trusted adult.
* Trust your gut instinct, if something doesn’t feel right, don’t do it. Do not be concerned with being impolite or hurting someone’s feelings.
* If someone does get a hold of you and tries to take you somewhere, do everything in your power to quickly get away and shout, “This person is trying to take me away!” or “This person is not my father/mother!”
* Use a recognised taxi service
* Consider carrying a phone charger
* Be discreet about the use or whereabouts on your person of expensive items and valuables such as phones etc
* Teenagers habitually use earbud/headphones to listen to music whilst walking, however, this can make them less aware of their surroundings e.g. when crossing the road or being followed
* Consider the use of a personal safety device e.g. alarm

As the clocks have now gone back an hour and summertime has ended, please remind your child about road safety and keeping safe in the dark. A member of staff had a very near miss recently with a young person cycling very fast across the school car park entrance in the semi-dark. The young person was not wearing a helmet or fluorescent clothing making it harder to be seen by the motorist.

A Guide for Parents https://www.rospa.com/media/documents/road-safety/teaching-road-safety-a-guide-for-parents.pdf

Safety First – Cycling at Night https://www.cycletraining.co.uk/cycle-training-and-cycle-safety/safety-first-cycling-at-night/

Keeping Children Safe in the Dark https://firstaidforlife.org.uk/keeping-children-safe-in-dark/



**Omegle App**

The Designated Safeguarding Leads have dealt with some concerning incidents involving the Omegle app and we know parents and carers may have also heard about Omegle in the news. A recent BBC investigation revealed sexually explicit videos and live streams (featuring minors as young as 7 or 8) had spread across the site during the Covid-19 pandemic. The BBC has since alerted the relevant authorities: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-56085499

Omegle is a website which is specifically designed to allow users to talk to strangers. It works by randomly matching users to talk one-to-one using either text or video. It is free and anonymous to use, with no account registration or age verification. So, what do parents need to know?

* **Children are likely to come into contact with strangers** - Omegle is specifically designed to encourage users to talk to strangers, by either using the website's chat function or video calling within Omegle. Whilst chat is initially anonymous, many users choose to share personal information including names, ages, locations, email addresses, phone numbers or social media handles.
* **Children may see explicit and adult content** -adult content is prevalent on Omegle, including pornographic content and adult language. Users have no control over what they may see or hear when matched up with a stranger. Some people use Omegle with the intention of engaging in sexually explicit conversations or participating in live sex acts, including with children and young people.
* **There is a lack of safety settings -** Omegle does not appear to have robust moderation nor is there a registration or age verification. Omegle does not allow users to report, flag or block chats that may be distressing, inappropriate or illegal. The website states: “Use Omegle at your own peril. Disconnect if anyone makes you feel uncomfortable.”

It’s important to keep talking to your child about their online safety and what personal information they share online – some guidance is linked below:

https://www.internetmatters.org/connecting-safely-online/advice-for-parents/tackling-the-hard-stuff-on-social-media-to-support-young-people/chatting-to-strangers-online/

https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/

If you suspect a child is a victim of online sexual abuse, report it immediately to CEOP or contact the police https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/

**Online Safety**

As we have seen above, the online world is posing an ever-increasing risk to children, and it is important that schools, parents and carers work together to take an active role in teaching children about online dangers. Learning how to act safely when using the internet is an incredibly important part of safeguarding our children. Technology isn’t going anywhere, it’s a fact it is a more permanent part of our everyday lives and an ever-increasing part of our children’s future lives and jobs. Most teenagers’ biggest fear is having their technology taken away, as this is how they communicate, socialise and learn in a world that is often alien to us as parents from our own childhoods. Part of our job as parents and educators is to prepare our children for this world and so banning phones or taking them away as a form of punishment does not teach them more responsible usage. Children need to learn from their online mistakes however difficult that is for us a adults, become self-sufficient and be encouraged to think about their own digital footprint.

You will have seen some recent communication to parents the school have shown our commitment to protecting our pupils online by working with National Online Safety, providing resources for all parents and carers. We really do encourage you to take a look at this resource if you have not done so already. The resources and weekly guides covering a huge range of topics, including:

 • Online Relationships • Fake Profiles & Social Bots • Online Bullying • Online Grooming • Child Sexual Exploitation • Sexual Harassment & Violence • Sexting • Live Streaming • Online Identity • Screen Addiction • Online Challenges • Overspending • Social Media Platforms • Online Gambling • Radicalisation, Terrorism & Extremism • Age Inappropriate Content • Copyright & Ownership • Hacking • Fake News • Online Fraud • Online Reputation • Personal Data • Pornography • Targeted Adverts & Pop-Ups • The Dark Web • Games & Trends

To create your account, please follow https://nationalonlinesafety.com/enrol/the-chalfonts-communitycollege and complete your details. When you are set up, you’ll be able to set ‘Parent/Carer’ as your user type. You can access National Online Safety online via any device- including via their brand-new smartphone app. To download the app, please go to your App Store and search for ‘National Online Safety’

**Your Designated Safeguarding Team at The Chalfonts Community College**

* Miss V Lang – Vice Principal and Strategic Lead for Safeguarding
* Mrs L Wilkins – Designated Safeguarding Lead
* Mrs P Procopi – Assistant Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead
* Miss T Borer – Behaviour & Welfare Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead

Please do contact us directly should you have any concerns or worries for your own child or another child who attends our school. You can do this by contacting the school office, in the first instance, and ask to speak to Mrs Wilkins. If we are unable to help directly, we can signpost you other organisations who can.

Please do let us know if there is anything you would like to see or know about in future safeguarding newsletters.

Thank you for reading – we hope that you have found this useful. Autumn Term One 2021