

9th July 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

Safer Scrolling

We are writing to let you know about an emerging issue that educators have reported recently as a growing trend in schools.

Research conducted by the University College London has found that algorithms are being used to popularise and gamify online hate and misogyny for young people.

Most notably, the incel movement is able to infiltrate social media platforms such as *TikTok*, *Instagram reels* and *YouTube Shorts*. The research, conducted in partnership between UCL, the University of Kent and the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), found a fourfold increase in the level of misogynistic content in the “For You” page of TikTok accounts over just five days on the platform, in an algorithmic modelling study.

Much of this content is delivered through the title of ‘Self-help’ for adolescents. However, entry into these videos quickly leads adolescents into an extreme subculture. Essentially, when young people linger on this content, they will be fed more of it. The dosage of the content increases and intensifies. For example, offering videos and advice such as how to conform to a much more narrow view of masculinity, how to become more dominant, how to date women to make sure that they are subservient etc.

This content is referred to as the manosphere and consists of a number of websites and blogs which oppose our fundamental British values and promote violence against women.

New research commissioned by Vodafone for Safer Internet Day shows that young boys are being targeted by AI algorithms with content which draws them into this movement. More than half of boys aged 11-14 have engaged with influencers from the manosphere and 79% of boys have encountered misogynistic or violent content. (*The Independent*)

We appreciate it is extremely difficult to supervise everything that your children watch online, but we would urge parents and carers to conduct spot checks on your child’s phone to regularly check the content your child is accessing. I would particularly urge parents to check content on the *Reddit* app which does not apply the same filters as other social media platforms.

Google Family Link is a free app that allows parents to set time limits and age restrictions, block apps and content and share your child’s location.

As a school, we will be tackling this issue through our personal development curriculum. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your child’s Head of Year.

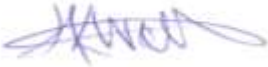
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If you would like to find out more about the research, please see the executive summary in the link below.

<https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Help%20and%20advice/Inclusion/Safer-scrolling.pdf>

Yours sincerely



Mrs H Watts
Principal

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