



# Alder Community High School

A Specialist Maths and Computing College

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Dear Parent/Carer

## Re: Online safety

We have recently been raising awareness about online safety with students. If your child has internet access, you too need to be aware of the risks posed. Some people try to use social media and apps to groom children and young people; it is important that you know how this works so that you are able to protect your children.

### How does grooming work online?

Grooming is about building a relationship with a child in order to later abuse them. This can be far easier online.

- Games, social media and chat rooms enable people to make contact with children to try to groom them.
- They can create multiple online identities and even pretend to be children and young people to trick real children into chatting and sharing.
- They can find out a lot about individual children before they make contact by looking at the things the child has posted.
- Using this information they can target children who are particularly vulnerable and carefully plan what they will say and show an interest in.
- Also they can contact lots of children very quickly in the hope that one will respond.

### How can I tell if my child is being groomed online?

There isn't one clear sign of online grooming and it can be very hard to spot. If your child is being groomed they will probably be trying to keep it a secret from you.

- **Have they suddenly become very secretive?** People who abuse will try to stop young people telling their friends and family about the abusive relationship.
- **Are they sad or withdrawn but won't say why?** If something is going on with your child online it might be really upsetting them; they might feel trapped, like they can't talk about it. Let them know you're there to listen.
- **Do they seem distracted?** We can all get caught up in ourselves if things are worrying us. If they seem unusually preoccupied it might be because things are weighing on them which they feel they can't talk about.
- **Do they have sudden mood swings?** Mood swings are not uncommon in adolescence but they can be a sign that someone has built a relationship with your child which is affecting their moods.
- **Are they unable to switch off from their phone or social media?** Lots of us find it hard not to check our phone or the internet, but if your child gets particularly worried or stressed when they can't, this can be a sign someone is controlling them.

**What should I tell my child?**

It's important to ensure that your children are aware of the risks posed by people with a sexual interest in children online. They should know that they should be wary of people they talk to online, not share too much personal information and be aware of how they appear in their online profiles. Also it's important that your child knows they can talk to you if anything is bothering them and that you will be supportive. Thinkuknow provides films and cartoons for you to watch and discuss with your children. These explore online grooming and other issues explaining the risks and safe behaviours in an age - appropriate way. You can watch them all on Thinkuknow or on YouTube.

**Where you can get help**

On the school website under 'Parent Zone' you will find a link to 'Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness' where we have posted some useful information.

The CEOPs website has lots of very useful information for parents and carers and also for young people. Use the web address below.

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>

If you would like further advice, support or guidance then please do not hesitate to contact me at school or in my absence you can speak to Mrs Hamilton or Mrs Robertson.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Lee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'R' and 'L'.

Rachel Lee  
Designated Safeguarding Leader  
Alder Community High School