

Safeguarding Newsletter

Summer 2019 edition

Dear Parent/Carer,

Currently, our school has four designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), however Miss Grant is currently on maternity leave so Mr. Hemmingway (our new deputy headteacher from September) will also be made a DSL at St. Mark's in September. This will add further capacity to safeguarding at St. Mark's.

During the Summer holiday, you will be pleased to know that new tall gates will be erected outside the school hall doors adjacent to the car park. This will allow the hall doors to be opened fully in warm weather, yet still ensure the safety of all the children inside the school. The gates will function on a magnetic lock so should there be a fire alarm, the gates will unlock automatically; allowing children and adults to get to safety.

Please take some time to read the issues in this newsletter surrounding safeguarding in schools today. We have regular training in school, so staff are aware of all of the issues in this newsletter, but it is important that you as parents/carers are also aware.

As always, if you have any concerns or suggestions on how we can make our school a safer and happier place, please do let me know.

Kind regards,

Mrs. Linley

County Lines – What is it?



It is likely you will have heard the term 'County Lines' in the news over the last few months. This is a real and growing form of criminal activity that exists nationally, regionally across the West Midlands. To explain, it is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs from urban areas into rural areas. The leaders of these gangs are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults, often without them realising

it, to move (and store) drugs and money. They use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

There may be signs of a change in a young person's behaviour such as:

- Returning home late, staying out all night or going missing
- Being found in areas away from home
- Increasing drug use, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work
- Unexplained money, phones, clothes or jewellery
- Increasingly disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- Using sexual, drug-related or violent language you wouldn't expect them to know
- Coming home with injuries or looking particularly dishevelled
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places

Schools and local police are working together to spot signs of exploitation and ensure young people are safe. If you know a child that may be at risk as described, they will need support and police should be advised on 101 if you have any concerns.

Useful websites about this issue:

<https://www.fearless.org/professionals/resources/gangs>
<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-is-county-lines>
<https://www.spurgeons.org/> <https://www.spurgeons.org/>



Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sends sexually explicit messages. They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages.

A young person is breaking the law if they:

- take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend
- share an explicit image/video of a child, even if it's shared between children of the same age

- possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave their permission for it to be created. There are many reasons why a young person may want to send a naked or semi-naked picture, video or message to someone else (sexting).
- joining in because they think that 'everyone is doing it'
- boosting their self-esteem
- flirting with others and testing their sexual identity
- exploring their sexual feelings
- to get attention and connect with new people on social media
- they may find it difficult to say no if somebody asks them for an explicit image, especially if the person asking is persistent

It's easy to send a photo or message but the sender has no control about how it's passed on. When images are stored or shared online, they become public. Some people may think that images and videos only last a few seconds on social media and then they're deleted, but they can still be saved or copied by others. This means that photos or videos which a young person may have shared privately could still end up being shared between adults they don't know.

Young people may think 'sexting' is harmless, but it can leave them vulnerable to:

- **Blackmail** -An offender may threaten to share the pictures with the child's family and friends unless the child sends money or more images
- **Bullying** -If images are shared with their peers or in school, the child may be bullied
- **Unwanted attention** -Images posted online can attract the attention of sex offenders who know how to search for, collect and modify images
- **Emotional distress** -Children can feel embarrassed and humiliated. If they're very distressed this could lead to suicide or self-harm.

WEBSITES TO HELP WITH THIS ISSUE:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/>

<https://parentinfo.org/article/sexting>

Please be aware of what your children are doing with their mobile phones. While sexting etc. is often a teenager issue, it can also involve younger pupils.

If you have any concerns about the safety and/or welfare of a child or young person telephone the **Children's Advice & Support Service (CASS) on 0121303 1888.**

Outside of normal office hours please **call 0121 675 4806 for the Emergency Duty Team.**

**Lead Designated
Safeguarding Lead**



Mrs Linley

**Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead**



Mrs Dykes

**Designated
Safeguarding Lead**



Mrs Grant

**Designated
Safeguarding Lead**



Miss Allen