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Dear Parent/Guardian

Internet Safety

In the interests of Safeguarding children and Internet Safety we like to keep abreast of current trends that are circulating in the Media and amongst children & young people.

In 2016, there was 'The Blue Whale Challenge' where children were allegedly encouraged to commit dares including ones where they could inflict harm to themselves. There was little evidence to validate whether any significant harm was caused by this threat, however the publicity caused by it caused distress to concerned parents. This trend is repeating itself under a new 'challenge'.

Through research into this 'challenge' there is some debate whether it is a real risk to children or just a hoax that has been brought to the attention of the media and sensationalised. It started as a prank with scary images sent of a figure made in Japan by a special effects team. The legend of the 'challenge' has increased through social media and has been used for cyberbullying through social media sites and mobile phones. The Media claims that there are also 'pop ups' in YouTube Clips and online games where children are asked to commit dangerous acts however there is no hard evidence to back this up.

In the UK, where concerns have been raised by parents, it has been found that the children involved had not been contacted by anyone about the 'challenge' but have googled it when they have heard about it. It has been reported that the hype about this 'challenge' has caused distress and fear in parents when reported cases are few and unsubstantiated.

As ever, it is important to ensure that children enjoy the use of technology safely. It's important for you, as a parent or carer, to be present while your children are online. This will give you a greater understanding of what they are doing on their devices, as well as providing you with the opportunity to discuss, support and stop certain activities that your child may be involved in. If your child mentions any 'challenges' they have heard about, you now have the background story behind this and can inform the children that this is a story that has been told to scare people and they are under no threat of harm from anyone else.

Please contact the school should you have any concerns regarding your child's online activity or malicious content that could affect them, especially if it involves this new trend. The School's 'Safety and Well-Being' web pages are regularly updated, where we upload any pieces of advice that we feel may help with keeping your child safe on the internet. This includes online safety guides, parental controls for devices, advice on texting codes and newsletters.

If you have any additional concerns please do not hesitate to contact a member of staff.

Yours faithfully

Miss A M Perrin
IT Coordinator