



Dear Parents and Carers

We are writing to you about an important issue that affects many young people today — online grooming and sextortion. As students spend more time online, it's important that we all help keep them safe.

What is online grooming?

Online grooming happens when someone tries to build trust with a young person online in order to take advantage of them. This might begin through social media, games, or messaging apps. Over time, the person may ask for photos, personal details, or try to meet in person.

What is sextortion?

Sextortion is when someone tricks or pressures a young person into sharing private or embarrassing images or videos online — and then threatens them to get more images, money or secrets.

Grooming and sextortion is illegal and the person being targeted is never to blame.

How big is the problem?

These numbers show why we must all take this seriously:

- Over the last 5-6 years, UK police forces have recorded **almost 34,000 online grooming crimes** against children since 2017.
- Nearly **half** of grooming offences are connected to **Snapchat**. Other platforms involved include WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and Messenger.
- Sextortion attempts are also being reported often. In early 2024, UK police forces received on average **over 110 reports per month** of sextortion involving children and teenagers.

These statistics are what has been *recorded* by police or by charities. The true number may be higher, because many incidents are not reported due to fear or embarrassment.

How to help your child stay safe online:

- Talk regularly with your child about who they are chatting with online. Spend some time online together, so you understand what platforms your child uses and how they work.
- Encourage them never to share personal images or information with people they don't really know in real life.
- Remind them it is okay to stop talking to, block, or report someone who makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Check the privacy settings on their social media, apps, games — make sure they are as safe as possible.
- Use parental controls or safe mode where available.

How to report online grooming or sextortion:

If you believe your child is being groomed or has been targeted by sextortion:

1. **Keep the messages, images or evidence** — do not delete anything. These will help police and other authorities.
2. Report it to **CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command)** via their website at www.ceop.police.uk. CEOP is part of the UK police forces and handles online abuse of children.
3. Contact your **local police** if you feel immediate danger — dial **999** in emergencies, or **101** for non-urgent help.
4. For support and advice, contact **Childline** (www.childline.org.uk or call 0800 1111) — they offer help and guidance for young people and parents.
5. If images or videos have been shared online, services like **Report Remove** (run by the Internet Watch Foundation and NSPCC) can help flag them and get them taken down.

We want to make sure all students feel safe, both at home and at school. Please talk with your child about these issues. Let them know they can talk to you or to someone at school if anything ever makes them feel worried or unsafe.

We believe by working together, we can help protect our young people in the online world.

Yours sincerely

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