

8 May 2024

Dear Parent / Carer

Update from National Crime Agency

You may be aware from the news in the last few days that all schools in the UK have recently been sent information from the National Crime Agency, raising awareness of the recent rise in reporting of financially motivated sexual extortion (a type of online blackmail often known in the media as 'sextortion'). Children and young people worldwide are being targeted. We have been asked to share the information below with you and would like to remind you that if you or your child has concerns regarding this, support is available.

This type of crime involves an adult offender (often from an organised crime group based overseas) threatening to release nude or semi-nude images and/or videos of a child or young person, unless they pay money, or meet

another financial demand, such as purchasing a pre-paid gift card. Victims of any age and gender can be targets, however a large proportion of cases have involved male victims aged 14-18. A child or young person is never to blame if they have been a victim. Offenders will have tricked, groomed and/or manipulated them into sharing an image. You can find out more about online blackmail on CEOP Education's parents and carers [website](#).

Talking to your child

It's important to have frequent, open and non-judgemental conversations with your child about relationships, sex and being online to build trust and support them if something goes wrong.

Financially motivated sexual extortion should be included in those conversations. Here are some tips about how to approach this:

- Chat regularly about their life online: have ongoing conversations with them about their life and time online. Continue to take an interest as they grow, explore new apps and sites together and talk in a balanced way, considering the benefits and the potential harms.
- Talk about where to find information about relationships and sex: organisations like CEOP [Education](#), [Childline](#) and [Brook](#) have age-appropriate advice topics such as sexual communication and image sharing. This will help your child to understand what unhealthy relationships look like, such as applying pressure and blackmail; and give them trusted sources of information to explore these topics.
- Review privacy settings: talk to your child about the importance of using privacy settings on their accounts to restrict who can contact them. Read CEOP [Education's](#) advice on how to talk your child about their privacy [settings](#).

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- Make sure they know where to go for support: let them know that they can come to you with any concerns and won't be judged. It's also important to make them aware of other trusted adults or sources of support, if they feel they can't talk to you, such as [Childline](#).
- Make sure they know where to report: remind your child how you can help them to report an incident to the police or using the CEOP Safety Centre. Let them know that if a nude or semi-nude of them has been shared without their consent, they can take these 3 steps to try and get them removed:
 1. Use [Report Remove](#), a tool from Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation. Your child can use this to remove images that have been shared or might be shared.
 2. Use [Take It Down](#), a tool from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Your child can use this to remove or stop the online sharing of images or videos.
 3. Report directly to the platform or app that the incident has occurred on. For advice on how to report to major social media platforms, visit [Internet Matters](#).

To learn more about what resources are available to help you support your child, visit the [UK Safer Internet Centre](#).

What can I do if this has happened to my child?

If your child tells you that someone is trying to trick, threaten or blackmail them online:

Don't pay, do stop contact and block: you may be tempted to pay, but there is no guarantee that this will stop the threats. As the offender's motive is to get money, once you have shown you can pay, they will likely ask for more and blackmail may continue. If you have paid, don't panic but don't pay anything more. Help your child to stop all communication with the offender and block them on any accounts that they have been contacted on.

Avoid deleting anything: try not to delete anything that could be used as evidence such as messages, images and bank account details.

Report to the police or CEOP: call 101 or 999 if there is an immediate risk of harm to your child or you can use the [CEOP Safety Centre](#) to report any online blackmail attempts.

If it has already happened and your child has shared an image and sent money to someone exploiting them:

- Reassure them that they've done the right thing by telling you: make sure they know they are not to blame for what has happened and they have done the right thing to ask for your help. Children and young people's mental health may be negatively impacted by experiences of exploitation; you can find advice on looking after your child's mental health from the [NHS](#).
- Report to the police or CEOP: call 101 or 999 if there is an immediate risk of harm to your child. Or you can use the [CEOP Safety Centre](#) to report an incident. If your child is 18 and over, call 101 or 999 if they are at risk of immediate harm.
- Report any images or videos that have been shared: help your child to remove images that are online or prevent images being shared online by following these three steps:



1. Use [Report Remove](#), a tool from Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation. Your child can use this to remove images that have been shared or might be shared.
2. Use [Take It Down](#), a tool from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Your child can use this to remove or stop the online sharing of images or videos.
3. Report directly to the platform or app that the incident has occurred on. For advice on how to report to major social media platforms, visit [Internet Matters](#).

I hope the information above proves useful and urge any student who is negatively impacted to reach out for support. In school, we are continually working to support students in feeling safe and well and to enable them to flourish both within and outside of school. Mrs Welsh and Miss Pickles lead the safeguarding and pastoral support in school alongside Heads of Year and Form Tutors to offer guidance when needed to all of our students and their parents/carers where appropriate. If your child has a concern, please encourage them to tell an adult and contact us using the details below if you need to make us aware of something.

Yours sincerely

LA Welsh

Lesley Welsh

Principal

Safeguarding is of the highest priority at George Pindar School. If you have a concern out of school, please contact the Safeguarding Mobile - Tel: 07895132530 or email: safeguarding@gps.hslt.academy