

'13 Reasons Why' and 'Blue Whale Challenge'

Dear Parents/Carers,

I want to take this opportunity to draw your attention to a teen drama called **'13 Reasons Why'**, available online, which tells the story of 17-year-old high school student who commits suicide.

The Youth Mental Health Foundation, 'Headspace' has urged school communities, parents, and mental health services to be aware of the dangers and risks associated for children and young people who have been exposed to this content and we thought it wise to make you aware.

Headspace's Kristen Douglas states that '13 Reasons Why' features 'risky suicide content' and may cause 'a distressing reaction' among some viewers.

Please be aware that the rating for this program is 18 and is suitable only for adults, as it contains graphic sexual violence and suicide scenes. We are aware there is also a social media game that is linked to this program. We feel it is important that you are aware of these details in order to make informed decisions about your children's viewing.

We have also received information which we feel we should share with you, detailing a dangerous online game called the **'Blue Whale Challenge'**. The Blue Whale Challenge is an internet based 'game' that has resulted in many deaths in several countries. The administrator of the challenge picks on vulnerable children and adults and gives them 50 challenges over a period of weeks, which culminate in suicide (challenge number 50). The majority of the challenges involve self-harm, followed by sending a picture to the administrator. A tell-tale sign is challenge number 11, which requires the participants to carve a whale on his/her hand with a razor and send a photograph to the administrator. This has been documented recently in the national press should you require any further details.

Local police have issued the following statement: 'Our advice to parents around monitoring their child's internet use remains the same; be vigilant and seek advice if you have any concerns. The NSPCC and Get Safe Online have some really useful information on their websites which we would advise parents to read.'

As always, should your child require any support, after having been exposed to such content, please ask them to contact a member of the pastoral team Ms Smith and Ms Dopadlik or Ms Myles (Deputy Head and Child Protection) your child's form tutor.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please don't hesitate to contact me at school.

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