



Robert Smyth Academy

Dear Families,

The Southport Inquiry

I am writing to you following the publication of The Southport Inquiry, which examined the circumstances leading to the murder of three children and the serious injury of others in a tragic attack in July 2024.

The report is understandably distressing, and it contains important lessons for all of us, schools, families, and professionals, about how we work together to keep children safe.

The inquiry highlights several key concerns that are relevant to families everywhere, including:

- **risks associated with online violence and graphic content**
- **unsupervised access to gaming, video platforms, and social media**
- **availability of weaponry via well-known online retailers**
- **the importance of early reporting of concerns**
- **the need for a strong, open partnership between families and schools**

Guidance

There are practical steps that parents can take to help safeguard their children:

- **Regularly check devices:** monitor phones, tablets, gaming consoles, and online accounts. Be aware of what your child is watching, who they are communicating with, what games they are playing, and the length and nature of their online activity.
- **Set clear boundaries and talk openly with your child:** Set clear boundaries about respectful behaviour and language and create opportunities for calm, open conversations about online content, emotional wellbeing, and safety. Children are more likely to share concerns when they feel listened to.
- **Contact the school:** If you have any concerns at all about your child's emotional wellbeing, behaviour, friendships, or online activity, please contact the academy. We would always rather have an early conversation than address issues too late.
- **Seek medical or professional advice:** If concerns relate to emotional regulation, mental health, or behavioural change, your GP can provide advice, referrals, and support.
- **Raise safeguarding concerns immediately:** If you become aware of access to violent or extremist content, unsafe behaviours, possession of weapons, or worrying online interactions, contact the school without delay.

The Southport inquiry reminds us how important it is for schools and parents to work together. One of the key messages is that when concerns are not addressed early, or when worrying behaviour is minimised or excused, risks can increase. Although this tragedy happened in Southport, a place full of good people, it is a powerful reminder that such events can happen anywhere. At Robert Smyth Academy, we must never allow familiarity or a sense of safety to reduce our vigilance. Safeguarding matters everywhere, including here.

As I come to the end of my time as Principal, it matters deeply to me to share honestly what is in my heart with you. This inquiry has stayed with me, like it will with many who read it. Our thoughts remain with the children who lost their lives and with the families whose lives have been changed forever.

The full report, in two volumes, is available here, and whilst it is hundreds of pages in length, I believe it is the responsibility of all parents to take the time to read it:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-southport-inquiry-phase-1-report>

Thank you for your continued trust and for working alongside us to keep our children safe.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Cleary
Principal