



Robert Smyth Academy

Dear Families,

National alert - Sextortion

I am sure that anyone who read the desperate account given by Ros and Mark Dowey, whose son Murray took his life after being targeted by criminals online, will have been left with a profound sense of sadness. Their account of what happened to their son is captured in an article available [here](#).

The reality is that this could have been any of our son's or children. Perhaps this isn't the Bank Holiday reading that we might like to engage with but it is something that is increasingly prevalent and as parents, families and educators we have a duty to be aware of the risks so that we can keep children and young people safe.

Nationally, there has been an increase in reporting of children and young people, **particularly teenage males**, being forced into paying money or meeting another financial demand after an adult offender has threatened to release nudes or semi-nudes of them. This is financially motivated sexual extortion, sometimes referred to as 'sextortion', and is a form of child sexual abuse. **Sextortion** involves people being forced into paying money or meeting another financial demand, after an offender has threatened to release nude or semi-nude photos of them. This could be a real photo taken by the victim, or a fake image created of them by the offender.

What are we doing in school?

- Students continue to receive education via PSHE regarding healthy relationships and ways that they can stay safe online. Year 7s have received a PSHE lesson on the risk of sending pictures; Year 9, a lesson on coercion with links to sextortion; Year 10, a lesson on sexting and the possibility of being a victim of sextortion. We will be updating our curriculum further in light of this national alert so that we can bring this issue to their attention and so they know how to keep safe.
- The IT department ran a session on sextortion for years 7 and 8 last week.
- Students can report a concern in person to a member of the [Safeguarding Team](#) or online via [My Voice](#)

What should I do if my child is targeted?

The National Crime Agency (NCA) advice is that if someone is trying to trick, threaten or blackmail online, parents should take the following steps:

- **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, telephone numbers, 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.

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/nca-issues-urgent-warning-about-sextortion>

Thank you once again for being the parents that your children need you to be and for engaging in difficult conversations, even if it feels uncomfortable, in their best interests.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Cleary
Principal



Robert Smyth Academy

Key Dates: Summer Term

- **Monday 6th May:** Bank Holiday (school closed)
- **Monday 7th May:** Reading and Spelling Test Week
- **Tuesday 7th May:** Dance Show
- **Wednesday 8th May:** Singing Show
- **Thursday 9th May:** Year 13 Leavers Dinner Bistro Live
- **Thursday 23rd May:** Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Monday 27th – 31st May:** MAY HALF-TERM

- **Monday 3rd June:** Year 7 Humanities Residential
- **Friday 7th June:** PSHE Dropdown (P1)
- **Monday 10th June:** PE Adventurous Residential
- **Tuesday 11th June:** Year 7 Careers Morning
- **Monday 17th June:** Sports Awards Evening
- **Friday 21st June:** Year 10 Faith Forum
- **Monday 24th June:** Year 9 MFL Residentials
- **Monday 24th June:** Year 10 Work Experience Week
- **Tuesday 25th June:** Year 12 Road Safety Day
- **Tuesday 25th June:** Year 12 UCAS Information Evening (6-7pm)
- **Wednesday 26th June:** Year 12 Careers Day
- **Wednesday 26th June:** Key Stage 3 Enterprise Day
- **Thursday 27th June:** Year 12 Faith Forum
- **Thursday 27th June:** Year 11 Prom (From 6.30pm)
- **Friday 28th June:** Teacher Training Day (school closed)
- **Monday 1st July:** Year 6 Meet the Tutor Evening (5-8pm; times TBC)
- **Tuesday 2nd July:** Year 6 Induction Day
- **Tuesday 2nd July:** Year 10 Careers Day
- **Wednesday 3rd July:** PSHE Dropdown (P1)
- **Wednesday 3rd July:** Summer Concert
- **Thursday 4th July:** Summer Concert
- **Thursday 4th July:** Sports Day (a change to the previously publicised date)
- **Wednesday 10th July:** End of Year Trips

- **Thursday 11th July:** SUMMER HOLIDAY BEGINS

Parents' Evening Dates (Summer Term)

- **Thursday 23rd May:** Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)
- **Thursday 6th June:** Year 8 Virtual Parents Evening (4.00 – 6.30pm)

Teacher Training Days (Summer Term)

- **Friday 28th June**

Term Dates (2024/25), as previously communicated, can be found [here](#).