

Our Ref: Safeguarding/LFo

10<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Dear Parent/ Guardian

## Re: Online Awareness

You may already be aware of the news reports and discussions surrounding the death of teenager Molly Russell. Molly, 14, very sadly took her own life and the ruling from the inquest that followed concluded that Molly *'died from an act of self-harm while suffering from depression and the negative effects of online content'*. The verdict by the coroner is extremely significant as it concludes that the online content *had* contributed to her death in a more than minimal way.

Molly's *'experience which involved two companies pushing, recommending and promoting material – reduced the court to tears.'* [The Guardian].

The NSPCC is now calling on the Government to strengthen the Online Safety Bill and hold tech companies to account, to ensure that children are protected online. The senior coroner recorded that material viewed by Molly on social media *'shouldn't have been available for a child to see'*.

Last year, Childline delivered more than 73,000 counselling sessions about mental health and, in the same period, there were 24,200 counselling sessions about suicidal thoughts or feelings. [NSPCC]

We are not writing today to scare but to inform. We all have an important part to play in keeping children safe. Whilst battle is waged for the giant tech companies to be held accountable and to take action, we would urge you to take time to talk with your children about their online usage and awareness. Check their phones, check what they are viewing and question its appropriateness. It's not just the sites that children visit, it's the promotion/ influencing that goes on within these sites/apps.

We have included a couple of links below that you may find informative/useful:

[Molly Russell | NSPCC](#)

[Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)

[Inappropriate or explicit content | NSPCC](#)

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If you have any concerns about your child's (or another's) use of social media please don't hesitate to contact us.

Please ensure your children know that they can speak to any member of staff in school if they are concerned about *any* activity on social media – Anything reported to us will be addressed with the utmost importance and discretion.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "L. Martin".

Mr L Martin  
**Designated Officer for Safeguarding &  
Child Protection**