

Ref: AST/SEL

Monday 24 March 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Adolescence – New Safeguarding Information

I am writing to you to outline important safeguarding information that has recently been highlighted in the national media following the release of a drama series on Netflix's called Adolescence.

Adolescence is a 2025 British crime drama television miniseries and centres on a 13-year-old schoolboy named Jamie Miller who is arrested for the murder of a female classmate. Investigations at Jamie's school, and questioning by a forensic psychologist, reveal that Jamie has been deeply disturbed by bullying via social media centred on incel subculture.

The hard-hitting miniseries has pulled back the curtain on something every parent, educator, and mentor need to know – **the hidden language of emojis**. Online, young people are communicating in ways that most adults would completely miss. Sadly, what may appear innocent could have a much darker, more sinister meaning.

Like many other schools in Essex, we would like to take this opportunity to share with you the meaning of some of the codes that are highlighted in the programme so you are better informed to support and safeguard your child and family.

Please find some of the key emojis / codes used in the film and their meaning:

 **Red pill** – “I see the truth”. Used in toxic male spaces to mean waking up to supposed hidden ‘truths’ about women and society, often linked to misogynistic ideologies.

 **Blue pill** – represents those who are “blind to the truth” or still believe in mainstream views about relationships and gender dynamics.

 **Dynamite Emoji** – an “exploding red pill”, meaning someone is a radicalised incel.

 **Kidney Bean** – a symbol linked to incel culture, something mocking women.

 **100 Emoji** - tied to the "80/20 rule," the belief that 80% of women are only attracted to 20% of men.

 **Black Hole** - used to express depression, hopelessness, or being sucked into negative online spaces.

 **Tornado** - represents chaos or feeling overwhelmed, sometimes used to indicate mental distress.

 **Frog Emoji** - associated with alt-right and extremist meme culture, often linked to Pepe the Frog, which has been co-opted by some toxic online groups.

 **Eagle** - a symbol of extreme nationalism, sometimes used in far-right online spaces.

 **Skull** - while often just slang for "that's funny" or "I'm dead (from laughing)," in certain groups, it can signal darker themes like nihilism or self-harm.



Heart Colours – Not just about love!



Red Heart = Love



Purple Heart = Lust



Yellow Heart = "Are you interested?"



Pink Heart = Interested but not in sex



Orange Heart = "You'll be okay"

Whilst we appreciate this information may be alarming however we recommend you consider the advice and guidance outlined below to best support and safeguard your child and family.

What should parents/carers do?

- 1. Get Curious, Not Combative** - Ask open-ended questions: "I saw something about emojis meaning different things. Have you heard of this?" Keep the conversation light.
- 2. Create a Judgment-Free Zone** - If your child feels like they'll be punished for opening up, they won't. Make it clear you're there to listen, not just lecture.
- 3. Decode Together** - Ask them to explain their digital world. What do different symbols mean? Who are the influencers they follow? Don't assume - ask.
- 4. Teach Critical Thinking** - Help them question online content. "Why do you think some groups push this idea? Who benefits?" Arm them with questions, not just rules.
- 5. Monitor Without Spying** - Open conversations work better than secret surveillance. Make checking in on their online spaces a normal part of parenting, not a crisis move.
- 6. Be Real About Manipulation** - Explain how toxic online groups groom young people by making them feel special, included, or like they have 'insider knowledge'!
- 7. Build Their Offline Confidence** - The more they feel valued and confident in the real world, the less they'll seek validation in dangerous online spaces.

The digital world is evolving faster than most adults can keep up however we don't have to be in the dark! **#DecodeTheCode #ProtectThem**. For further guidance about online safety, please see the **NSPCC Online Safety Top Tips** - [NSPCC Online Safety](#). Thank you for taking the time to read this safeguarding letter. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

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Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

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