



The Castle School

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Information Evening for Parents & Carers

Monday 4th April 2022

Child Exploitation & Community Risk

#NotAtOurSchool



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Neighbourhood Policing Team – Avon & Somerset Police



Plan for the session

- Reminder of our key teaching mechanisms of positive behaviours and understanding risk
- Consider the key risks for students in the community
- Know some signs to look out for that could mean your child is at risk
- Suggest the best ways that families can support children
- Opportunity to ask questions and discuss



What does #NotAtOurSchool truly mean for The Castle School?

- Every single member of our community celebrates difference and stands up for equality
- We treat each other with kindness and respect
- We show empathy towards others
- Nobody uses terms in their spoken language that are harmful, hurtful or discriminatory
- We do not believe in 'banter' – this idea that you can use terms within friendship groups and therefore it is acceptable



How are students taught about risk, relationships and safety at The Castle School?

- *Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE)*
 - *Sessions delivered by the specialist team*
 - *Assemblies and tutor time programme*
 - *Curriculum enrichment days*
- *Wider curriculum, eg. Science, Computing & IT*
- *Character education – belonging*



Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE) – curriculum map:

[Microsoft Word - PSHE Curriculum Map 2021-22
\(castleschool.co.uk\)](https://www.castleschool.co.uk/pshe-curriculum-map-2021-22)

All of our composite knowledge sits within three themes, in line with the PSHE Association's recommended teaching. These themes are: *relationships, living in the wider world, health & wellbeing.*

Composite knowledge includes: *drugs & alcohol, staying safe online, risk, consent, sexual education, sexual abuse and harassment, extremism*



Child Exploitation

Child exploitation refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child.

These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It covers situations of manipulation, misuse, abuse, victimisation, oppression or ill-treatment.

Save the Children, 2020



Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation... occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Home Office, September 2018



Child Sexual Exploitation

“Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

“The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”

HM Government



Child Exploitation – warning signs:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc without plausible explanation;
- Gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks;
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college or work;
- Leaving home/care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late;
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls;
- Returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol;
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age/sexually transmitted infections;
- Evidence of/suspicious of physical or sexual assault;
- Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups;
- Multiple callers (unknown adults or peers);
- Frequenting areas known for sex work;
- Concerning use of internet or other social media;
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours; and
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.



County Lines

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

[HM Government, 2018](#)

A threat update issued by the National Crime Agency in November 2018 suggests:

- this affects the majority of areas with almost 90% of police forces reporting evidence of county lines activity.
- two thirds of all the police forces reporting county lines activity report the associated exploitation of children.



Somerset county lines drug dealers jailed for more than 20 years

By [Burnham-On-Sea.com](https://www.burnham-on-sea.com) - March 22, 2022

Drug dealers who brought heroin and cocaine to Somerset from London have received prison sentences totalling more than 20 years this week for their role in a criminal enterprise estimated to be worth hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Three men and two women were sentenced at Taunton Crown Court on Monday (March 21st) for conspiracy to supply class A drugs.

The convictions followed a joint operation between Avon and Somerset Police and the Metropolitan Police targeting county lines drug supply.

Officers collected evidence showing all five defendants were involved in the supply of cocaine and heroin. The group were found by police to have brought approximately 5kg of illegal drugs to Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil from the capital between August 2020 and February 2021.





Gangs and Youth Violence

Youth violence is often synonymous with gangs, with an increasing concern about knife crime. *Safeguarding Network, 2022.*



Vulnerable groups

- Chaotic home life where children are not priority
- Poor supervision from an early age
- Issues within home (e.g. domestic abuse, mental ill health)
- Familial history of offending
- Children with additional needs
- Poor engagement with education
- Poor self-image / self-worth
- Looked after children



Reasons for **joining a gang**

- gangs provide a sense of belonging and purpose
- to get respect / status or power
- recruited by other gang members and are pressured to join
- boredom
- poverty
- feeling they will not find a better life or good job
- financial gain (legal or otherwise)





Spotting **the signs**

- aggression and / or non-compliance
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty developing relationships
- reduction in attendance and /or attainment / missing episodes
- low self-esteem, depression or anxiety
- self-harm
- substance misuse
- change in behaviour and appearance
- unexplained possessions
- refusal to enter certain areas



Child Substance Misuse

Substance misuse refers to the use of psychoactive substances in a way that is harmful or hazardous to health. This includes alcohol and illicit drugs. The use of such substances can lead to dependency. *World Health Organisation, 2017.*

Statistics from the [NHS](#) show that 1 in 4 pupils reported taking drugs, with this evenly being spread between boys and girls. As could be predicted, drug use in particular will increase with age, with the most common drug used being cannabis, although others report nitrous oxide (laughing gas) and volatile substances (for example glue).

A lot is experimental or recreational. However, where substance misuse becomes a problem, this can often be linked to: absence from education; having mental health needs; being in homes where there is domestic abuse or a history of involvement with Children's Social Care.



What might you **see**?

Child and young people who are misusing substances may have:

- Changing friendship groups;
- Signs of self-neglect;
- Poor attendance / performance;
- Lack of motivation;
- Disengagement from hobbies / interests;
- Change in appetite / eating patterns;
- Criminal behaviours.



[Honest information about drugs | FRANK \(talktofrank.com\)](https://www.talktofrank.com)



Suggestions for parents & carers:

- Ensure you know where your child is and what they are doing at all times – journeys to and from school especially
- Have an open dialogue – positives and negatives
- Aim for trust and an understanding that mistakes happen with teenagers
- Speak with your children about devices often – restrict their access, limit their time, remove their devices at night
- Have conversations about friendships and relationships regularly – linked to social media and devices
- Be alert to older friendships, gift giving, secrecy, shifting groups, worry, changes in behaviours that are typical
- Work with us as a school as you need and wish – community is vital



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Information from a Police perspective – Sgt Kat Forrest



Questions or further discussion

If you would like to contact us following this session, please telephone the Main Office (01823 274073) and someone will get back to you.

Thank you for your time and support.