



Mr Andrew Murray
Headteacher

73 Breck Road
Poulton Le Fylde
Lancashire
FY6 7AQ
01253 893102

Parent / Carer

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Dear Parent / Carer

It is likely you have heard the term 'County Lines' used in the news recently. This is a growing form of criminal activity that exists nationally, regionally across Lancashire, and here in Fylde and Wyre.

County Lines is a term used to describe how gangs and organised criminal networks export illegal drugs into other (mainly rural) areas by exploiting children and vulnerable adults, often without them realising it. Gang members may use coercion, intimidation, violence and weapons to do this.

There may be signs of a change in a young person's behaviour such as:

- returning home late, staying out all night or going missing
- being found in areas away from home
- increasing drug use, or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- unexplained money, phone(s), clothes or jewellery
- increasingly disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- using sexual, drug-related or violent language you wouldn't expect them to know
- coming home with injuries or looking particularly dishevelled
- having hotel cards or keys to unknown places.

The school, local police and wider agencies are working together to spot signs of exploitation and ensure our young people are safe. We're keen that parents / carers are aware and can offer support.

We would ask that you be aware of County Lines and if you have any concerns about a young person or have any information regarding County Lines to contact Lancashire Police on 101. You can also contact school and ask to speak to one of our designated safeguarding leads if you have concerns about your child. There are some links below that you may find useful for more information:

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-is-county-lines> (on The Children's Society's website there are also guides for parents available in 14 different languages).

<https://www.fearless.org/professionals/resources/gangs>

Due to the increase in incidents nationally and regionally, we are writing to inform you that we are introducing several measures in school. Please be assured this is not in response to any incidents in school, and is around safeguarding our community, ensuring all our students are aware of risk and the importance of keeping themselves safe.

We work very closely with The Police Early Action team as part of our regular safeguarding. They will be assisting us in randomly screening students in school in order to deter them from carrying any weapons or drugs and from bringing them into school. Like many schools we now have metal detecting wands to support in keeping our young people safe. As part of working together we will also support the training of the police dogs with possible visits taking place. We are clear that multi agency working and proactive, transparent action gives all our young people the clearest message and support around making safe choices and avoiding exploitation.

Please do not hesitate to contact school for more information.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Bishop
Deputy Head Teacher