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Dear Parents/Carers

This Pastoral Newsletter focuses in what Parents/Carers need to know about social pressures linked to 'influencers'.

Social media influencers are people who have established credibility in a specific industry and have the power to influence other people's decisions. Most commonly associated with YouTube and Instagram, 'influencers' will usually have a large number of followers and be viewed as authentic by their audience. It is for this reason that many influencers are often paid by big companies to promote their products in the hope of persuading their followers to purchase the goods.

AN UNREALISTIC PERCEPTION OF BODY IMAGE

Some of the most popular social media influencers often depict themselves as having the 'perfect body' and are paid to promote items such as health supplements or swimwear, which young people believe can help them achieve the same look. What is not always realised is that these images can be edited or filtered and aren't always a true-life representation. Your child may feel like this is what they need to look like and in some cases, become obsessed with their body image, which could contribute towards a lower self-esteem or even becoming depressed if they can't achieve the same look.



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Registered office: Haileybury Academy Trust, London Road, Hertford Heath, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13 7NU

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ENCOURAGING BAD HABITS

Although many social media influencers will get paid to advertise brands and their products, they will also post their own material online too, usually depicting their daily life or an activity for example. This may have both desirable and undesirable consequences, with influencers able to inspire both good habits, such as healthy eating, exercise or kindness. However it may also encourage children to adopt bad habits, such as drinking, smoking, swearing or even criminal behaviour, particularly if these are seen to be endorsed by the influencer.



Social media influencers hold a lot of persuasion with their audience and are often looked up to by their younger followers. Many children will see them as credible, authentic and trust what they see online. However, some influencers may not always believe in the product they are promoting and therefore can mislead their followers, abusing their level of confidence in them. Children may therefore find themselves looking up to people who are disingenuous of who feign interest in activities that they themselves do not actually care about.

Safety Tips for Parents and Carers

- **Follow who they follow.** A good way to see first-hand who may be influencing your child is to create your own social media account and follow the same people who they follow. This will give you a strong indication of what is shaping how your child behaves and what they are taking an interest in.
- **Talk about role models.** Role models can play an important part of your child's life particularly outside of the home. Talk to your child about who they look up to and why. Remind them that not everyone online is who they seem to be and if you do have concerns that your child is being negatively influenced work with them in finding more positive role models.
- **Encourage independent thinking.** Social media influencers can be quite powerful individuals who hold a lot of persuasive power so it is important to encourage your child to think independently about everything they see and engage with online. Talk to them about the dangers of blindly following others and keeping an open mind when viewing content. Teach them to always question people's motives online, especially when they see individuals promoting a brand or product, which they are likely to have been paid to advertise and may not personally endorse.

For more information about how you can support your child to be safe online please visit the following website www.nationalonlinesafety.com

If you have any concerns or queries relating to any of the above information, please do not hesitate to contact your child's Assistant or Year Achievement Coordinator.

Mrs M Goodes
Vice Principal



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