

Dear Parent / Carer

### Incel Culture and 'Manosphere'

The new Netflix series 'Adolescence' has highlighted a rise of *Incel communities* and the influence on young people and is being watched and discussed by a lot of people currently. It is a very powerful drama highlighting the risks of this culture.

It is important that we are aware of this online subculture and recognise warning signs. The term incel stands for *involuntarily celibate* and refers to men who believe they are unable to attract romantic relationships despite wanting to. This culture can impact on the boy's behaviour and attitudes but could also be used by others to insult or bully e.g. as we saw in Adolescence.

Some incel communities foster resentment towards women and blame them for their perceived misfortune. This can lead onto the promotion of misogyny, victimhood and sometimes radicalisation within these communities (mainly online).

### Parents/ Carers- How Can you help?





















With the internet, it is difficult to stay ahead of our children's knowledge and understanding. However, you should look out for the following things and share them with your child's Year Leader, counsellor or GP if you are concerned:

- Low self-esteem
- Use of incel language
- Use of emojis in online conversation
- Hostility towards women
- Concerning time spent online
- Secrecy around phone/ IT use - you must be able to always have access to your child's phone passwords in case you need to check anything

### Understanding Terminology and Emoji Meanings

While hidden meanings behind emojis used by young people can be harmless, some may indicate risks including extremism, drugs, sexual interactions and bullying. This was recently brought to life on the show, Adolescence, which depicted the devastating consequences of harmful online interactions, and the warning signs (in the form of emojis) that are easily missed by adults.

To help staff and parents decode potentially harmful messages, we've compiled a list of emojis commonly used in dangerous contexts. This includes specific emojis used on the show, and others highlighted by the work of Olivia Brown, Associate Professor in Digital Futures at the University of Bath.

Emoji(s)	Potential Meaning
	The red pill emoji is linked to incel, or “involuntarily celibate”, culture, where misogynistic and extremist views are prevalent. The meaning originates from The Matrix films, but has been adopted by the manosphere to represent those who see the “real truth” in the world.
	The blue pill emoji is used in incel culture to represent the opposite of the red pill - those who are blind to the real truth and adhere to more mainstream views about gender dynamics.
	The 100 emoji is used in relation to incel culture. It represents the idea promoted by those in the manosphere that 80% of women are attracted to 20% of men.
	The dynamite emoji is used in incel culture to represent the exploding red pill, in other words, breaking out of societal norms and myths.
	The kidney beans emoji is tied to incel culture. It is thought to represent coffee beans, which link back to a series of memes mocking women.
	The plug emoji can be used to mean drug dealer, also known as a person’s “plug”.
	The snowflake, nose and petrol pump emojis are all used to represent the drug cocaine.
	The horse emojis can be used to represent the drug ketamine.
	Skull, alien and devil emojis may represent the drug ecstasy.
	The balloon emoji may be used to represent the drug nitrous oxide.
	Camera emojis can represent a request for nude/explicit images or videos.
	Peach, aubergine and cherry emojis can all be used to represent body parts in a sexual context.
	The sweat emoji may also be used in a sexual context.
	The face with no mouth emoji can convey the message “Do not tell anybody”. It may be used in a bullying context or when sharing inappropriate, illegal or sensitive information.
	The frog emoji can mean “You’re ugly”. It is used in bullying or harassment contexts.
	Heart emojis can mean different things depending on the colour used. The red heart usually means love.
	The purple heart can be used to convey attraction or sexual desire.
	The yellow heart may mean “I’m interested, are you interested?”
	The pink heart can mean “I’m interested but not in sex.”
	An orange heart is more likely to be platonic, and means “You’re going to be fine.”

When monitoring digital interactions for these emojis, it’s important to remember that context matters. Their use does not automatically indicate a harmful conversation - the specific circumstances in which a symbol is used will reveal whether it’s something that should spark concern. Understanding the hidden meanings behind emojis can be most helpful when they are considered alongside other markers of risk.

Of course, the language used by teenagers is constantly evolving. The meanings of emojis can change from one month to the next, so it's useful to try to stay abreast of the latest slang, as it may offer signs of safeguarding risks.

Regular, judgement-free discussions with young people on their understanding and experience of online interactions encourages openness and can establish a strong foundation for digital safety lessons

## Reminders

Just a reminder of our safeguarding systems. There are a number of ways to report any concerns about a child or to seek support:

- Speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is Ashleigh Brough
- Speak to reception staff who will give you a paper form on which you can write your concerns
- Email address on the 'Safeguarding' page of the school's website
- Contact children's social services: 0191 2772500

If a child needs support they can speak to any member of staff in school as all staff complete annual safeguarding training or they can ask to speak to the DSL or Deputy Safeguarding Leads who are: Mrs Bell, Mr Brown and Mr Bouleau. They can also use the paper form or email address if they do not feel confident enough to speak to an adult themselves.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the School.

**Mrs Bell**  
Designated Safeguarding Lead

**Mrs Roderick**  
Trust Safeguarding Lead