



Fake News

Jonny Timms, Deputy Head (Pastoral)

2017 is going to be the year of Fake News. Everywhere the news is reported, someone seems to claim that the facts are not true, vice-versa, or both. The trouble is that good, honest news does not sell papers with sensational news getting more "clicks" on the internet. This attracts the advertisers who fund the sites and therefore fuel the spread of the news.

We do need to be concerned though. Try this headline:

"Chilling Challenge: What is the Blue Whale suicide challenge, is it now in the UK and what are police doing to stop it?" - The Sun, 2 May 2017

This week we received a message from safeguarding agencies alerting us to an apparent surge of suicides caused by an app or an online challenge. We read the warnings, but something didn't feel quite right; we contacted our police liaison, and after some research, it emerged that the story is an Urban Myth that originated in 2015. This is just one of the many ghastly media transmissions out there which are of concern. Another example is a TV drama called "[13 Reasons Why](#)" which is currently being aired on Netflix and has been heavily criticised for glamorising teenage suicide.

The best advice we can give is that parents should take a close interest in their children's use of technology, social media and screen time, and encourage that all such activity takes place in a supervised space.