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**CUMBRIA**  
CONSTABULARY  
SAFER STRONGER CUMBRIA

**My Reference**  
**Your Reference**

[www.cumbria.police.uk](http://www.cumbria.police.uk)

17 July 2014

Dear parent/guardian

**RE- Child safety online.**

I am very grateful to the schools in North Cumbria who have agreed to forward this letter to the parents of their students.

I have the police responsibility for child protection in North Cumbria and I would like to bring your attention to an issue that is impacting on an increasing amount of children and families.

On a daily basis the police receive reports of crimes involving children, either as victims or offenders, using the internet.

There are a wide variety of offences but they include the sexual grooming of children and there has been a vast increase in children sending inappropriate images of themselves via computer applications such as 'Snapchat', 'Kik', 'Whatsapp' and 'Instagram'. By inappropriate images I mean either naked pictures or photographs of a sexual nature. This behaviour is being undertaken by both primary and secondary school pupils. The youngest person to have sent inappropriate images, that I am aware of, is just seven years old.

Although it is not my main concern, by sending these types of images, the children are breaking the law and are liable to find themselves in the criminal justice system.

However it is the risk of sexual and emotional harm to the children which is a greater worry. They leave themselves wide open to embarrassment, bullying and in extreme cases, blackmail.

I know of countless incidents where photographs sent to a trusted friend end up being viewed by hundreds if not thousands of people. Once the images are posted it is not possible to retrieve them, they are there for eternity and can be viewed across the world-wide web.

The internet has become a part of everyday life (especially for the younger generation) and has many plus points. I am asking you, as parents, to be aware of the very real dangers that it can pose to children and to take responsibility for supervising your child's use of the internet.

Yours faithfully

Detective Inspector Roy Ledingham  
North Cumbria Public Protection Unit.