Dear Parents,

**RE: Online Safety Review – Update: Huggy Wuggy and Poppy Playtime**

As you know we are passionate about online safety for our children here at Woodlands and we would like to give you a quick update about some recent flurry of interest in an online horror 'game' that is breaking through into the playground.

The game is called Poppy Playtime and one of the most popular characters from the game, Huggy Wuggy, has reignited safeguarding concerns due to reports of online challenges and disturbing content featuring the character.

Although Poppy Playtime was released last year, there has been a recent surge in the creation of Huggy Wuggy-related content, alongside reported playground-style challenges based on the character.

'Police have reported that some schools have seen children recreating scenes in the playground, hugging and whispering “nasty things” in the recipient’s ear.'

The Dorset Police Cyber Protection Officer has recently released a statement, warning parents that children may be viewing graphic fan-made videos that are popping up on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok.

Some created videos feature songs alongside animation, designed to be upsetting and ‘creepy’. Others feature jump-scare animations. The videos appear across several popular platforms, in particular on TikTok and YouTube. The hashtag ‘huggy wuggy’ has over 2.9B views on TikTok.

The iNEQE completed a safeguarding review about the game last year and can be viewed [here](https://ineqe.com/2021/12/03/poppy-playtime-online-safety-review/). However, in summary, there are obvious concerns about our children's mental health and wellbeing:

There are multiple risks that can arise from children and young people being exposed to frightening content before they are prepared.

**Added anxiety and stress** – Children and young people are still growing and learning. They may not be at a level of emotional maturity that would be able to process frightening content, even if it is intentional. Horror games could hamper that growth by creating unnecessary anxiety and stress.

**Intrusive thoughts** – Everyone has the ‘thing that goes bump in the night.’ If children play this game or watch it, the Boogeyman could easily be replaced with characters like Huggy Wuggy. This could cause children to lose focus or sleep and could interrupt family rest cycles.

**New fears** – The manipulation of child-friendly items into threatening characters exploits the sense of security a child would feel around these things. They may suddenly be terrified of something that had never been a worry before.

You can read the 'Huggy Wuggy' full review [here](https://ineqe.com/2022/04/04/huggy-wuggy-online-safety-review/) which includes top tips for keeping children safe online and includes a Youtube link for you as a parent.

Please do take the time to have a look.