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Dear Parents and Carers,

## **ONLINE SAFETY – YEAR 6**

We have been discussing the portrayal of boys and girls on social media and the internet. We have also talked a lot about social media, particularly with regards to moving up to Year 7 and becoming more independent.

**From 6L and Mr Lee**

# Common Sense on Boys, Girls and Media Messages



## What's the Issue?

In today's 24/7 media world, girls and boys are flooded with messages about how they should look and act. The images and stories that children see in the media play a powerful role in framing their sense of what's "acceptable" and what isn't. The media often encourages narrow definitions of girls' and boys' roles, and these definitions are now making their way into the digital world. As children grow older and become more active online, they may encounter more extreme attitudes about differences between girls and boys. Our media landscape has widened, creating new forms and sources of pressure for girls to look pretty and "sexy" and for boys to toughen up and "act like a man".

## Why Does It Matter?

When children see the same gender stereotypes portrayed over and over again in the media, they can become deeply confused about how the world sees them and what they can grow up to be. They may also form judgements about others based on what they see in stories and images. When children are exposed to rigid ideas about boys' and girls' roles through their peers – both online and offline – it may be more difficult to convince them not to adopt those ideas.

## What Families Can Do

In this digital age, it's important for children to develop media-literacy skills early on. Parents, carers, relatives, teachers and other adult mentors are in an important position to help children make sense of the gender messages they see on TV, at the movies, in ads, in games and online – and to encourage them not to continue harmful stereotypes.

### common sense says

**Point out photos that look too good to be true.** When you're standing in line at the supermarket with your children, take a look at the magazine covers. Explain how publishers use computers to airbrush images of people. Point out elements of our bodies that would normally be captured in photos but are missing there. Where are the freckles, veins or wisps of hair?

**Seek our positive role models.** The characters and stars that children love may not show a complete picture of boys' and girls' roles. Help them by finding role models in books, on TV, in movies and in real life that show children how they can be recognised for their talents and brains rather than their looks.

**Challenge assumptions.** Depending on your children's ages, you can talk about common stereotypes and ask your children whether or not to accept them. Use examples from the real world – such as all blondes are dumb, for example – to show that media portrayals are often inaccurate.

# Selling Stereotypes



## \* DID YOU KNOW ...

Kids age 2-11 see more than 25,000 ads per year on TV alone.

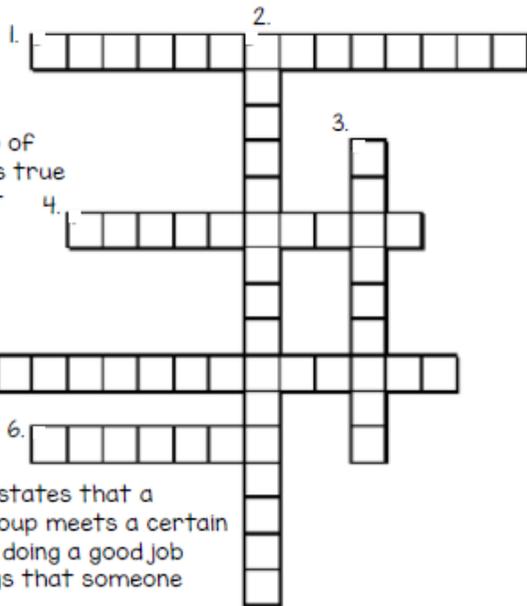
## Crossword Puzzle

### Across:

- 1. a duty or obligation
- 4. an idea about a group of people that's not always true
- 5. a legal document that explains how a website gathers and uses your private information
- 6. to observe closely

### Down:

- 2. a sign or stamp that states that a website, company, or group meets a certain set of standards and is doing a good job
- 3. 'to imagine the feelings that someone else is experiencing'



## \* WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can stereotypes about girls and boys make people feel?

## \* DO YOU REMEMBER ...

What stereotypes are and how we learn stereotypes about boys and girls from the world around us?

## 1. Family Activity

Find a toy commercial with your parent -- either online or on TV -- and discuss the following three questions with them: 1). Who created this commercial? 2). How is the commercial trying to get our attention? 3). Does this commercial encourage certain messages about boys and/or girls?

## 2. Tech It Up!

Create a new advertisement for a toy that's designed to attract both boys and girls -- and that doesn't send the message that the product is a "boy's" toy or a "girl's" toy. Use Shadow Puppet EDU on a smartphone or tablet to design your ad!

## 3. Common Sense Says ...

It can be hard to identify ads online, especially because so many are disguised as games or contests. Even adults get confused! Ask yourself: Does what I'm seeing or doing make me want to buy something (such as a toy, a certain snack, or a ticket to a movie)? If the answer is yes, there's a good chance you're seeing an ad.

