



Date: 22nd May 2024

Dear Parent / Guardian / Carer,

I feel that I need to bring to your attention an issue that we are currently having at school over the use of social media apps outside of school hours. In recent days, we have been informed of a number of issues where children are using abusive and/or threatening language on social media towards each other. Although this is not happening on the school site, it then affects behaviour, anxiety and subsequently lesson time and the learning of pupils in school.

We cannot regulate the online access that pupils have outside school, but if an issue such as cyberbullying or aggressive behaviour is reported to us, we have a duty of care to inform the parents of the children involved.

In regards to social media sites themselves, there is clear guidance on the appropriate age ranges for certain online apps and I would like to draw your attention to these.

Nearly all social media services require users to be at least **13 years of age** to access and use their services. This includes **Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, Musical.ly** and **Skype**.

Whilst there is no age restriction for watching videos on YouTube, **users need to be 13 or older to have their own YouTube account** (enabling them to subscribe to other channels, like videos, post comments, share their own content and flag inappropriate content).

The online world is a minefield for children and the situation has changed significantly in the last 10-15 years, as a whole range of unlimited content, both good and bad, is a few clicks away. Once something has been posted on social media, it is very hard to get rid of.

I would ask parents therefore to be vigilant and monitor what children are posting online at this current time. Threatening and abusive content could result in police involvement if a child is over the age of 10.

What can parents/carers do to help?

Ground Rules

- Discuss as a family how the internet will be used in your house. Consider what should be kept private online (personal information, photos etc.) and decide rules for making and meeting online friends. Make sure you know what your child is doing online much like you would offline.

Online Safety

- Where able to, use Parental Control functions for computers, mobile phones and games consoles to block unsuitable content or contact

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- Remember that parental control tools are not always 100% effective and sometimes, unsuitable content can get past them, so don't rely on them alone to protect your child.

Location

- Think about locating your computer/laptop/games console in a supervised family area. Always supervise the use of webcams in an application which allows voice or video chat. Consider your child's use of other devices that allow internet access such as Mobile Phones and Games Consoles.

Dialogue

- Always ensure your child knows how to block or report people online who send nasty or inappropriate messages or content. Encourage your child not to retaliate or reply.
- Make sure your child knows to tell an adult they trust if they see something online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable.
- It's essential to be realistic - banning the internet or technology will not work and it often makes a child less likely to report a problem. Education around safe use is essential.

By working together, we can try to stop issues before they arise.

Yours Sincerely,
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