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Dear Parents and Carers,

Internet safety and the use of Social Media

As we approach the end of this academic year and the summer break commences, I want to take this opportunity to remind you about internet safety and use of social media.

We are committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet and as such we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a growing concern, due to the increase in inappropriate use of social media sites.

Many of the issues that have been brought to our attention recently have involved the use of:

TikTok is a video-sharing social networking service. It is used to create short lipsync, comedy, and talent videos. TikTok requires that users be at least 13 years old to use the app and that anyone under the age of 18 must have approval of a parent or guardian. Children are reporting that they have up to 1,500 followers, with posted videos showing their bedrooms and often with them wearing their school uniform.



YouTube is a video sharing website and app that allows users to share, view and upload videos via mobile, tablet, laptop and desktop computer. The user agreement requires users to be age 13 or older.

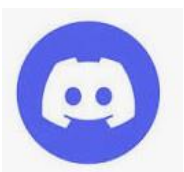


Whats App – An instant messaging app for smartphones. The user agreement requires users to be age 16 or older. Children are often creating groups to which others are joining. This means that all information is shared with anyone who is in the group so privacy is lost and in some cases strangers have been added to the group.



Instagram - an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service which enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.

Snapchat - an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.



Discord is an instant messaging and digital distribution platform. Users communicate with voice calls, video calls, text messaging, media and files in private chats or as part of communities called servers. It requires that users are at least 13 years old.



Roblox is a free-to-play multiplayer gaming platform available on PC, mobile, and Xbox One that allows users to create and share their own games, as well as play other users' games. Players can send messages and chat. The game is aimed at 7-to-18 year-olds, but anyone

can use the platform. Users under the age of 13 receive stricter settings if registered with the correct age. However, the creators recommend that parents of younger children set up a PIN with parental controls.

The dangers of having accounts are;

- Your child may accept friend requests, or will have followers, they don't know in real life. This increases the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour. The general rule is, if they are not friends in real life, they shouldn't be friends online.
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on social media is **NOT** moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for your child.
- Photographs shared by users are **NOT** moderated and therefore your child is at more risk of being exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own.
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age exposes them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options.
- Social media sites can be exploited by bullies and for inappropriate contact.
- Social media sites cannot and do not verify its members, therefore, it is important to remember that if your son/daughter can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else.
- Many sites use targeted advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other appropriate nature, depending on the age they stated when they registered.

Primarily, these occurrences and reported incidents of misuse of social media sites happen at home, after school hours when children have access to web sites that are blocked in school. **We strongly advise that access to these devices is monitored with a device free bedroom policy** The most effective thing you can do is have a regular device catch up, talking through your child's use of apps, their followers and the material they post.

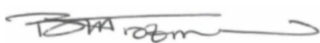
Although we cannot govern matters occurring out of school hours which is parental responsibility, we will take action if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our pupils, including reporting the use of inappropriate images of young people to the police, as this is a legal matter. This also refers to inappropriate text messages.

We recommend that all parents visit the CEOP Think U Know website for more information on keeping your child safe online www.thinkuknow.co.uk. Here you can use the red button to report online abuse. We would also recommend that you record or take screen grabs and report the user to the app, in order that they can take appropriate action.

Further guidance is available through www.net-aware.org.uk and www.getsafeonline.org

Through lessons provided at school, assemblies, guest speakers, and PSHE lessons, we do our best to provide our children with the awareness and knowledge they need in order to recognise and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful behaviour and to respond appropriately. However, it is only through a collaborative effort between parents and teachers that we will succeed in creating responsible and safe cyber citizens.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Beverley Trotman
Principal