



Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024

## **Mobile Phone And Social Media Use Outside Of School**

We are writing to you because we have some concerns regarding the children's use of mobile phones and social media outside of school- during evenings and weekends. We are aware that the majority of our Year 6 children have access to mobile phones and therefore, we feel that this is an important message for these children.

There are groups of pupils using social media to be persistently unkind about other pupils over platforms such as Snapchat, WhatsApp and TikTok. We understand that this has included both sharing unkind comments about pupils and sharing unkind images or memes of the pupils. This is leading to a lot of upset spilling in to the school day and means that we are currently spending a significant amount of time sorting out such problems, which could be better spent on teaching and learning activities. It is also not in line with our ethos or values as a school, teaching the children to be kind, respectful and the best that they can be.

The legal age recommendation for using most social media apps, such as Snap Chat, is 13 years and over- and is 16 years old and over for the use of WhatsApp. If you do allow your child to access social media, we ask for your vigilance in checking your child's phone/devices on a regular basis. Just like their interactions in person, online interactions require supervision and support. Some strategies that are recommended and known to be successful with the children include:

- Monitoring their phones for the apps that are downloaded
- Turning on parental controls on phones, laptops and consoles
- Reviewing the messages they send on platforms and apps – making monitoring part of a daily or weekly routine
- Setting expectations about what space (preferably communal) and times they have access to devices
- Encouraging them to share or discuss with you what they are doing online, encouraging them to screen-shot any messages or online content which concerns them- before deleting or blocking

As this is happening outside of school, we are asking for your partnership in dealing with this. We are very limited in what we can do but unfortunately, if the situation is getting to the stage where social media is being used inappropriately, the school will have to report underage usage straight to the company. This will involve citing the accounts being used for minors and attaching the screenshots of inappropriate comments, soundbites and pictures sent. In extreme cases, the police may be asked to support with any concerns.

We have formed a close relationship with our local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) who advises parents and carers to report any malicious communication to the police by calling 101. Lots of the children spoke to the officer last week, during her visit to school, and raised concerns about messages and images being sent on Snap Chat and WhatsApp.

As a school, we are responding to this with additional teaching of Online Safety during computing, PSHE and wellbeing lessons, and in 1:1/small group conversations and teaching opportunities as they arise. We always advise the children to show their trusted adults at home when they receive inappropriate, or unkind, content so that they are safe online.

Thank you for your continued support in helping the school overcome the challenges of inappropriate mobile phone and social media use. It will help keep all of the children safe online and help them to maintain their focus on their learning, which is so important in helping them achieve to their academic potentials.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr Pugh

Deputy Headteacher and Online Safety Lead

