



Online Safety For parents with pupils in Year 6

A lot of issues that we have dealt with in Year 6 classes over the past few years in school stems from online activity, especially in WhatsApp and Snapchat group chats. This isn't anything new, but it's seemingly getting worse. Children are having fall outs, disputes and disagreements online and bringing it into school, which affects their ability to focus and learn.

Many parents (not just at our school but across the world) monitor their child's online activity and think they know what their child is doing online – and this is good. However, some parents don't always have the full or accurate picture, either because they don't understand the technology well enough, or because their children are covert about it.

It's really important that you know what your children are *actually* doing online. Years ago, the major worry was if they were looking at inappropriate content. Whilst this is still a worry, it's now progressed even deeper to what they're saying in group chats, who they're talking to and whether they actually know them, and what they're saying or sharing on self-destructive apps such as Snapchat (apps that delete messages/pictures after being viewed).

Whilst apps such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok all have age ratings of 13+, we understand that in today's world, many children under this age are using them. So, what we really care about is your child being safe online. Take a look at some of the questions below and see if there's anything you need to change, investigate or seek further support with.



CHANGE? INVESTIGATE? GET FURTHER SUPPORT?



Does your child have their phone/tablet in their bedroom overnight?

If the answer is yes, the big question here is *why*? For many children, this is a distraction and an opportunity to message late into the night. It's common knowledge that little or disrupted sleep has a detrimental impact on academic performance and mental wellbeing. If your child uses their device as a wake-up alarm, consider buying a cheap digital alarm clock as an alternative.

Does your child use Snapchat and is their location always visible to anyone who adds them?

Snap Map is a feature that displays your real-time location for any friends added on Snapchat. It's a feature that can be turned off – but is it for your child?

Does your child use group chats/calls?

Group chats with both children and adults can often descend into chaos! Sometimes, that's the fun of them, but adults tend to deal with that a lot better. For children, group chats seem like a good idea but rarely have fully positive outcomes. It may be worth seeing what group chats your child is in and what they think the purpose of the chat is.

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Does your child's WhatsApp allow them to automatically be added into a group chat by anyone?

It's possible to have to approve any group chat request on WhatsApp, but this is not enabled by default.

Information on doing this for both Android and iOS is found here:

https://faq.whatsapp.com/1131457590844955/?cms_platform=android

Is your child's TikTok/Instagram account private?

Very few children like the idea of having a private account. After all, their goal is to gain followers and become rich and famous! However, the likelihood of this happening (and at their age) is lower than winning the lottery...

Accounts that are public can be accessed by anyone worldwide – and they don't even need to be specifically searched for. Algorithms bring up all sorts of videos for everyone around the globe – your child's could be next.

I hope that this letter has been useful and – as always – do get in touch if you have any questions or require further support.

Best wishes and Merry Christmas,

Mr Spendlow
Deputy Headteacher

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