



1st March 2024

IMPORTANT – KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE – ‘WhatsApp’

It was around this time last year when we last wrote to parents concerning the challenges presented by the use of WhatsApp by children. Once again, sadly, I have today been managing a situation, brought to me by a parent, where a child's safety and well-being has been compromised through engagement with this app. I am grateful to them for their engagement.

It should be made clear that the child involved was not unsafe due to any negligence on their part, or indeed any ill-will from anyone known to them. However, it is important that as parents we are all aware that **it is all too easy for children to find themselves as members of groups on WhatsApp with people they do not know**. This position presents a world of dangers and complexity which children are not equipped to manage, and that puts them at significant risk.

Since May 2018, the minimum age for using WhatsApp is <u>16 years old</u>
--

The reason for the age-rating of 16 years in relation to WhatsApp is because of the inherent dangers that it presents. Even the most diligent of parents would find it impossible to manage all of these – and although our children may seek to tell us otherwise, they cannot manage it effectively when they are of primary school age.

Today's events lead me to once again **urge you to talk to your child, monitor their use of their technology, and consider carefully whether your child has the skills with which to manage apps such as WhatsApp, designed with adults in mind.**

Should you wish to talk to someone in school about your child's use of WhatsApp or any other online tools please approach their teacher who may support you directly or signpost you to further sources of advice.

With regard to finding out more about WhatsApp and other social media applications a good place to start would be the advice detailed on the school's website, accessible through School Gateway – look for 'Parents' and 'Keeping Your Children Safe Online'.

Scott Hampton
Head Teacher