



21st March 2022

IMPORTANT – KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE – ‘Children’s use of WhatsApp’

Following recent chats with parents and discussions more widely with some of the children in Year 6 we have been made aware that a significant number of children in the class are using What’s App to communicate outside school. When discussing their experiences of this app the children have shared some well-considered and sometimes troubling insights about how their use of this tool impacts upon their lives and well-being. Some of their comments are detailed below and are being shared with their permission:-

- ‘You can be added to a group chat even if you don’t want to be – this can mean you get messages from strangers’
 - ‘Lack of expression and voice tones can lead to messages feeling offensive’
 - ‘It can lead to friendships being hurt’
 - ‘Messages on group chats come through late at night, it can wake me up’
 - ‘A ‘hi’ message late at night can lead to loads of pings as everyone replies ‘hi’
 - ‘11.00pm, 1.00am...messages come through late’
 - ‘I once woke up to 153 messages!’
- ‘The admin invites users to group chats, but the admin role can be passed around so you can find yourself in a group with people that you don’t know’
 - ‘People misusing admin responsibilities can lead to people being hurt’

What is clear from each of these comments is that children’s engagement with this means of communication is impacting upon their sense of wellbeing. Some of the comments also signal the potential for children to be exposed to significant harm. There is also significant potential for children to be exposed to inappropriate websites, discussions and material.

Since May 2018, the minimum age for using WhatsApp is 16 years old

The world of online communication continues to be a complex and fast-moving one – as a parent it can feel difficult to keep up with, it can even present challenge to us as adults from time to time! **We would 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 What’s App or any other online tool 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’.

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