



*Learning to
Succeed*

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Parents – are you checking your child's device?

Unfortunately, we have had a number of issues creeping into school time this term linked to children's use of social media (TikTok and WhatsApp have been prime suspects). Lockdowns have meant more children accessing ways to contact their friends – there is no denying that the benefits have been huge. However, the negative element is that primary aged children are rarely mature enough to use this appropriately without supervision.

Children have been upset in school about things that have been said about them, or typed in a message, or photographs uploaded without their permission. We teach this very regularly and our e-safety programme covers all of the above points and when asked children do know the right answers. Our local PCSO's have also visited school on several occasions to deliver the same messages. However, our hands are tied beyond this. It is fundamentally your parental responsibility to check what your child is doing.

WhatsApp is not supposed to be used by children under 16 years of age, and any messaging app in my opinion is therefore the same, whatever it is called. I am aware that this lockdown period has meant even younger children than normal are accessing ways of contacting their friends and there is no way of us stopping this unless every parent in school took it away, which is unrealistic. This means, as parents there are some things you really must be doing.

- A. Checking all messages very regularly, and if you see something that you don't think is right then it needs raising. Ensure you have these conversations with your child and that they are very much aware that you will be reading the whole content each time they go on it.
- B. It is not advisable for your child to be in their bedroom for long periods whilst they are in chats or group calls. Monitor what is happening, have them downstairs where possible. Supervision is very necessary, and if you cannot supervise then they should not be on with other children.
- C. Contact other parents that your child is messaging so you have an agreement together that it will be monitored and you will communicate together. This way any problems can be resolved on a united front.
- D. Access <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>. The NSPCC and O2 have joined forces to provide you with a wealth of advice and support which will help you to keep up to date on the current Apps, games and social media sites as well as give further advice on how to keep children safe online.

I'm sorry if this seems firm, but I do not want learning time hampering with things that are happening on devices at home and I am sure you do not either. We would not let children go unsupervised at lunch or break as we know how many issues can arise from nothing – we are constantly monitoring and alleviating minor issues as they arise, as children do on occasions need that management to make the right choices and to be kind to others. The same rules apply at home and on devices – they are not ready to be left unsupervised, so please help us by making sure they are not.

Yours sincerely

Mr Garry Johnson
Head teacher

