

Wednesday 19th October 2022

Dear Year 6 Parents and Carers,

We are writing to you as we have become aware that children are using social networking apps, in particular WhatsApp and TikTok, and they are not always being used in a positive way. Group chats on WhatsApp have been encouraging targeted bullying-type language, and viewing videos on TikTok and YouTube has been the source of some offensive discriminatory language that has then been used in school.

Although we teach the children about keeping safe online, they are at their most vulnerable when using devices outside of school. As parents and carers, it is important that you are familiar with the applications and social networks they use. It is essential that you know what sites your child is accessing and how they are interacting. It is recommended that the best way to help children keep safe is by having open lines of communication, setting the expectation that you are able to access their phones and the understanding of why you need to monitor their activity.

There are age restrictions on many social media sites, which are designed to safeguard children. The **minimum age of use for WhatsApp is 16 years old** (see: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/general/security-and-privacy/minimum-age-to-use-whatsapp/?lang=en> for further information). TikTok requires that users be a minimum of 13 years of age. Lots of excellent information can be found on the website <https://www.common sense media.org/>.

If you decide to allow access to these sites, please ensure that privacy settings are set to the highest possible level. We would advise you to discuss the use of social media sites with your child, set clear rules and boundaries and **monitor their use**. Make sure that your child is aware that these sites are often public and that they should not befriend someone they do not know. They also need to learn to use social media responsibly and learn that the same rules about respecting each other apply online as face to face. **We do not recommend children taking part in group chats as messages can so easily be misconstrued and this is where problems are likely to arise.**

If you something has happened online that you are concerned about you can report it using this link <https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/> or you can contact the police directly on 101 if you were to feel a child is in any danger.

We thank you in advance for your help on this matter. Please contact us should you wish to speak further.

Kind regards,

The Year 6 Team