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PLEASE DO NOT IGNORE THIS LETTER!

26th February 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to make you aware of the e-safety poster on the rear of this letter, which includes advice to help keep your children safe online. The poster shows the minimal ages for children to use a range of popular apps and social media tools. Unfortunately, we are dealing with an increasing amount of incidents as a result of children misusing these apps outside of school, which can then affect their mental health and wellbeing. By using these apps, pupils are also opening themselves up to a wide range of potential dangers from outside influences, such as online predators, cyberbullying, witnessing offensive and inappropriate materials, etc.



This week alone I have dealt with incidents where children in Year 4 have used WhatsApp (which has an age rating of 16+) and TikTok (which has a 13+ age rating) to send profound language and threatening messages to each other in the form of images, videos and audio files. I have also dealt with children in Year 6 using Snapchat (which has an age rating of 13+) to send unkind and threatening messages to each other. In addition, we have many pupils in the school who have created their own YouTube channels, as well as pupils who have their own Facebook and Twitter accounts (again, these are all 13+), etc. We're also aware of pupils in our Foundation Phase who have their own phones/tablets and apps of this nature installed.

As a school, we encourage parents to support us with the education and wellbeing of their children, as well as eliminate these opportunities for children to be exposed to offensive materials and online bullying. There is a reason why there is an age limit on these apps - many pupils below these ages are not yet mature enough to use these tools responsibly, but are also vulnerable to the dangers which they could become exposed to!

I would like to kindly ask parents to **check if your children have these apps installed on their devices and to remove them**. As a school, we can teach the children about the dangers of using these apps, but it is the responsibility of parents to check and prevent their children from using and having access to these tools outside of school. We are always happy and willing to support parents, so please feel free to speak to us if you'd like some help or attend one of the parent workshops on our P.E.A.S calendar. But, we also need your support as these issues are being brought in to school and are affecting the children's wellbeing, education, etc.

We teach pupils of all ages in the school about the many benefits of using digital technology and online tools, which I am a huge advocate of to support the children's education, but also the dangers and harm these can potentially bring if not used appropriately. We will continue to promote the safe use of social media and Internet use to stress to the children about the importance of being a responsible digital citizen, but we strongly urge parents to support us with this, as we're unable to monitor and enforce it outside of school.

Thank you for your continued support and please feel free to contact us if you'd like any further information!

Kind regards,

Mr D Cooper
(Deputy Headteacher)