



Friday 4th December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

In commitment to our Nurture value and in exercising our statutory duty to keep our children safe, I am writing to share my concern for the children's welfare and general wellbeing in relation to their use of online platforms. These platforms include online gaming, messaging and social media. I have made the decision to send this letter to all parents and carers in Years 4, 5 & 6. Whilst I recognise that the letter does not apply to all families, our investigations have revealed that many pupils are accessing the platforms listed below and therefore it is important that this information is received by all.

Since returning to school in September, we have become increasingly concerned about the children's online activity at home and the impact that this has on their wellbeing and relationships with their peers, but also the risk to their safety. We recognise that this can be a particularly challenging area for parents and carers to understand and monitor. The pandemic has meant that many children have been unable to connect with friends at school or in other social settings which has resulted in lots more children connecting with their friends online. We appreciate that this has been a difficult time for everyone however we have serious concerns about the children's safety and the detrimental impact this online behaviour could have.

We are aware that a vast number of children across KS2 are using a variety of different social media platforms, such as Instagram and Tik Tok, messaging apps, such as What's App, and online gaming platforms, such as Fortnite, Roblox and Among Us. In recent weeks, we are aware of a number of difficulties between friendship groups which have been instigated or exacerbated by unmonitored messaging and group chats. We have been alarmed to hear that a number of children have been contacted by an adult through an instant chat but without the knowledge of their parent or carers.

In observing the children's play and through discussion with the children, we are aware that lots of children are accessing age-inappropriate content and music through platforms such as You Tube and Tik Tok. The children are replicating and imitating these videos and games on the playground without the maturity or understanding to recognise what is or isn't appropriate.

We are also concerned about the amount of time the children are spending on these platforms. We know that social media and gaming is designed to be addictive. The children are reporting that they are spending a considerable amount of time on these platforms. In some instances, this results in very late nights and the children arrive at school tired and unprepared for the school day.



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As a school we are committed to supporting parents and carers in making informed decisions to keep your children safe. We have therefore purchased an annual subscription to **National Online Safety** to become a certified school. This will allow all parents access to all the latest online safety advice. Parents and carers can download a free app from the App Store or Google Play:-



- Hundreds of online safety guides on the topics you need to know about – from screen addiction, fake news and trolling to hacking, social media influencers and sexting;
- An online safety training course for parents – developed by our experts and delivered by online safety ambassador Myleene Klass;
- A user-friendly interface with increased functionality – find exactly what you need, when you need it;
- The option to get notifications to your phone as soon as new content becomes available – so you can stay up-to-date with the latest online crazes (and risks);
- An in-app voting system so you can help determine the subjects you'd like us to cover in future;
- The facility to personalise your content by favouriting key resources.

We ask that all parents and carers review their child's use of these online platforms in accordance with the guidance provided by National Online Safety. If you have any concerns or require any additional advice and support please do not hesitate to contact myself or Debbie Stevens, Safeguarding Officer, who will be very happy to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. M. Murfin
Headteacher



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