



Alfred Street Junior School

Rushden, Northamptonshire NN10 9YS
Web site: www.alfredstreetjunior.org
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Telephone: 01933 353762
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Headteacher: Mrs K O'Connor
School Business Manager: Mrs Debbie Heffernan

14.6.19

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Y6 Media Concerns

I am writing to you because of my increasing concerns with regards to safety online and the use of social media by the Year 6 children when they are out of school.

The children have shared with us information today about their use of WhatsApp amongst their peers. I have been disturbed by some of the inappropriate language that I have seen and the comments that have been made. I would encourage you all tonight, to have a read of the conversations that are taking place, sometimes very late into the evening. It also alarmed me that there were people in the group whom they did not know but had been invited by others. The children then went on to share what school they attended, told their friends (and the people not known to them) where they were going to be, and arranging to meet each other. This could lead to a serious safeguarding incident if the information got into the wrong hands. I have spoken to the children today about my concerns and would ask that you reiterate this at home. I would also like to remind you that these sites have a minimum age and that the children should not legally be using them. Such sites (including Instagram, Facebook and Twitter) are increasingly being used as a means to communicate abusive and bullying content. Sites that allow anonymity or content that appears to disappear reduce inhibitions. Children and young people who would not be cruel face-to-face, and who do not see the consequences of their actions, may feel justified saying hurtful things online.

As a school, we expect that our children interact with each other appropriately and with respect, both inside and outside of school hours. We take all reports of internet misuse seriously and investigate them. We will take action if our pupils/students are found to have used social media sites to bully other pupils, to contact or make comments about members of staff or to bring the school into disrepute in some other way.

Above all, our aims are to prevent misuse and put a stop to online bullying. All pupils and students have been reminded in assemblies, for example, during Anti-Bullying Week of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy, which is available on the school website. We have also looked at the theme of Cyber-bullying and children were asked to stop and think before they post or share something on the internet – about the potential impact for others and for themselves of what they might write in haste or on the spur of the moment. It is in this spirit that I am writing to ask for your help, as parents, in tackling this issue.

Alongside my concerns about WhatsApp, it has also been brought to my attention that children are using sites/playing games such as Roblox, where members of the public can talk to them. This carries a whole host of safeguarding concerns and we ask that you educate yourselves about the dangers of these games/sites.

We would like you to be aware of the following guidelines and take action, where necessary:

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- Seriously consider telling your child that they are not allowed to use certain social networking sites.
- Whether you allow your child to use certain sites or not, have a conversation with them about appropriate use, including how the anonymous or instantaneous nature of online communication can change the way people behave.
- Please ensure that, where possible, your child adjusts privacy settings so that posts on social networking sites are only seen by those they choose.
- Please supervise your child's activities online, especially on social networking sites. At a minimum, you should have their username/password for sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and sit down with them from time to time to monitor what is happening online.
- If your child experiences or witnesses online bullying, tell them not to respond. The best option is to take a print out or screen shot of the offending post and then delete the "app" and the account.
- Please report incidents of online bullying to us or encourage your child to do so.

Keeping safe on What's App

- If young people are in group chats remind them to only communicate with people they know
- Be careful in group chats as people can easily see what's being said and get hold of contact numbers, especially strangers
- **If they feel uncomfortable, leave the group and tell an adult**
- You can also block people if need be
- Be extra careful sharing your location on What's App, via settings on the phone we recommend location is switched off
- You can also change the "last seen" information in your settings again we recommend those are off
- In your biography don't give out personal information or don't have anything

More information on What's App can be found in this useful [parent guide](https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/guidance/whatsapp-safety-a-how-to-guide-for-parents/)
<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/guidance/whatsapp-safety-a-how-to-guide-for-parents/>

Keeping safe on Snapchat

- A gentle and calm reminder to young people that sharing pictures or videos on Snapchat come's with risk
- **Remind young people meeting anyone online they do not know is dangerous**
- Don't forget videos and images can be shared on Snapchat rapidly via a status, sharing information with everyone and sending information to specific people

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- Ideally location should be set to ghost mode
- **Remind young people on Snapchat to report, block and tell a trusted adult if something concerns them**
- The Snapchat [checklist's](https://dwn5wtkv5mp2x.cloudfront.net/ufiles/Snapchat-Checklist_web.pdf) are useful https://dwn5wtkv5mp2x.cloudfront.net/ufiles/Snapchat-Checklist_web.pdf

I have included a leaflet with this post about '10 apps that teens are using that parents need to know about' and for more information on online safety, you can visit the following websites:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

<http://www.getnetwise.org/>

We will also be holding an NSPCC online safety workshop for parents this term, a letter will follow. If you have any further concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With thanks in advance for your support and assistance in this important matter.

Kind regards

Mrs K O'Connor
Head Teacher

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