



Friday 19th May 2023

Safety on digital devices

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am aware that many of your children have their own mobile phone or access to a tablet or shared device. It has recently come to my attention that many children in Year 6 are using **WhatsApp** and other messaging platforms such as **Discord** to communicate with friends and family. Whilst these apps have become very popular in recent years, it is important to remember that they are **not aimed at primary school aged children** and are in fact designed for older teenagers and adults.

You are invited to attend an information session next week on **Wednesday 24th May 3.15-4.15** where we will share further details of risks and ways to keep your child safe on a device.

Unsupervised use of these apps pose several serious risks:

Group chats with unknown members

If your child is added to a group chat, they have no control over who else enters the chat and has access to their mobile phone number. They can then receive direct messages and calls from a stranger. Someone may claim to be a friend of a friend or a child from a nearby school but your child has no way of knowing whether this is true or not.

Inappropriate content

Photos, videos, web links and voice notes can be sent over these platforms. There is no filter ensuring that the content your child sees is safe. Content that your child posts can be screen-grabbed or filmed and shared beyond the group they are in. **The sharing of screen-grabs and films can cause significant distress.** Unkind content may be shared in this manner, as well as content that is no longer in context or that has been edited.

Social exclusion and cyber-bullying

The group 'admin' controls who is allowed in the group. Your child can be excluded from groups which involve their friends in school. There may be pressure to be online at certain times or your child may feel anxious about being left out of certain conversations. This can have an impact on their happiness at school and at home. Some children send hurtful messages via WhatsApp that they would not say in person. These messages can be deleted so you may not see them on the thread later.

We would encourage you to carefully consider whether continuing to allow your child to access these apps is in their best interests. If you allow your child to communicate online, it is important that **your supervision and oversight includes knowing your child's password, allowing use in shared spaces at agreed times, checking their chats and being aware that messages can be deleted from both 1:1 and group threads.** Most important will be your ongoing discussions about trust and safe choices.

Unfortunately, some of the content of recent conversations in Year 6 group chats have been inappropriate and unkind. Whilst we have worked to address this in school – and will continue to do so through our e-safety lessons and PSHE curriculum - your role in ensuring safe social media use will continue to be vital in protecting your child from the risks it poses. **No child should have access to a device without an adult knowing their login and password details for the device and any account they hold. This poses a significant risk.**

I have attached a links to parent and carer guides to WhatsApp and Discord to help you have those conversations at home. Please do not hesitate to contact me, Ms Wyatt or Mr Isaac if you have any concerns about your child's social media use. Thank you in advance for your support in keeping all of our children safe.

Anna Case
Headteacher