

11th May 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Social Media and Keeping your Child Safe

It has been brought to our attention that some of our children have Tiktok, Instagram, Whatsapp, Facebook and other social media profiles, even though the permitted minimum age to use these sites is 13 years old, according to their terms and conditions.

We are committed to keeping our children safe and continue to promote the safe, responsible use of the internet. As such, we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern. As a nation, keeping our children safe online is crucial and the problems listed below are being recognised in our local area. Please take the time to read them and reflect on the access your child might have to such platforms and profiles.

1) Individual profile problems

Many of the children's social media profiles:

- are not properly secured with poor privacy settings that mean anyone in the world can see their profile.
- have pictures of them (and other children) in their school uniform, current location or other landmark features, which makes them easily identifiable and means people can work out where they will be in real life.
- have content which is wholly inappropriate in terms of the language and/or images on them. Even if your child's profile is appropriate, being 'friends' with someone who has such a profile means your child can see it.

2) General social networking issues

Websites such as Tiktok offer amazing communication and social connections, however they are created with their audience in mind and this is specifically over 13 years old.

Possible risks for children under 13 using the site may include:

- Use of 'age targeted' advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other inappropriate nature, depending on the age they stated they were when they registered.
- Children may accept followers or friend requests from people they don't know in real life, which



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- could increase the risk of inappropriate or dangerous contact or behaviour and potential for grooming.
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared is not moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children.
- Photographs shared by users are not moderated and therefore children could be exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own.
- It has been noted recently there has been a rise in children accessing material such as anime pornography or links to such content via these platforms.
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options.
- Platforms could be exploited by bullies and for other inappropriate contact.
- Platforms cannot and do not verify members often; therefore it is important to remember that if your child can lie about their age and who they are online, so can anyone else!

3) Parental responsibility

We feel it is important to point out the risks of underage use of such sites, so that you can make an informed decision as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not at the moment.

Should you decide to allow your child of any age to have a profile on any of these sites we strongly advise you to:

- Check their profile is set to private and that only friends can see information that is posted.
- Monitor your child's use and talk to them about safe and appropriate online behaviour, such as not sharing personal information and not posting offensive messages or photos.
- Ask them to install the CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) application from www.facebook.com/clickceop on their profile. This places a bookmark on their profile to CEOP and the 'Report Abuse' button, which has been known to deter offenders.
- Have a look at the advice for parents/carers about each platform – we send these out regularly and they are also on the Safeguarding page of our school website <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/tips-and-advice/>
- Set up your own profile so you understand how the site works and ask your child to have you as a friend/follower on their profile so you know what they are posting online.
- Make sure your child understands the following basic e-safety rules that we have learnt about at school
 - Always keep your profile as private as possible.
 - If possible, don't put in your full name, e.g. Bart S, instead of Bart Simpson
 - Never accept friends you don't know in real life



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- Never post anything – writing or images – which could reveal your identity
- Never post anything you wouldn't want your parents to see
- Never agree to meet somebody you only know online without telling a trusted adult
- Always tell someone if you feel threatened or someone upsets you

We also recommend that all parents visit the CEOP Think U Know website for more information on keeping your child safe online www.thinkuknow.co.uk

4) School support and action

We take e-safety very seriously, and we discuss e-safety issues throughout the year with our pupils. There is an e-safety section on our school website that contains resources for parents/carers and we will continue to post relevant support and guidance in our weekly newsletters and parent accounts.

If you feel that you, or your child, need further support in keeping them safe on the internet, please contact your child's class teacher or make an appointment to see Amanda Clifton by emailing a.clifton@oswaldroad.manchester.sch.uk.

We have a duty of care to all the children in our school therefore we will take action (which may involve the police) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our children.

Kind regards,

Donna Wealleans
Deputy Headteacher



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