



3rd June 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Safeguarding Update (Half Term 6) - Online safety for your child

Online safety continues to be an important feature of our safeguarding policy, both in keeping children safe online in school and at home. The online world continues to change and evolve, and as such there are some recent issues that I would like to highlight to all parents and carers:

WhatsApp

We have recently had reports about children being invited to join a WhatsApp group, that is claiming to gain a world record by being the biggest WhatsApp group ever.

Most social media sites set an age restriction for users of their site, and WhatsApp is aged 13. However, there is no verification and we know some young people often ignore the terms and conditions of use, unaware of the risks it might pose - **this can expose them to more harmful material at a younger age**

For more information on WhatsApp, including the risks to children and the support for parents, please refer to the information on our website [here](#)

Children could be putting themselves and others at risk when they:

- Upload inappropriate content
- Post photos and material which could damage their own or others' reputations
- Post inappropriate comments and pictures on other people's profiles that are humiliating or result in bullying
- Create false profiles and accept friend requests or engage with people they do not know.
- Not knowing who they are talking to

In the interest of safeguarding and the online world, we would recommend the following:

- Have a conversation with your child about appropriate use, including the impact of 'peer pressure' when with friends, how anonymous or instantaneous online communication can change behaviours and online 'stranger danger' can occur
- Ensure your child understands how their actions can affect others and the impact it may have on individuals both mentally and emotionally
- Remind your child that things posted or said online form part of their digital footprint.
- If you choose to allow your child to use online social networking sites, set privacy settings and block anonymous posts
- It is important that parents/carers are positive role models - please consider your own use of social media, and if there are any concerns please contact school directly. **Parents should not be contacting other children online about their use of social media**
- Encourage your child to tell you or school about anything which makes them feel 'uncomfortable'
- Refrain from posting anything which could damage reputations or be considered offensive, inappropriate or illegal



- Report and block any activity which is inappropriate or risky.

Social media accounts

It is important that children are encouraged to use the Internet safely and responsibly outside of school. **It is vital that parents and carers regularly monitor their child's use of the Internet (including PC's, laptops, tablets and phones) and talk to them about staying safe online.** On the e-safety page of the school website, there are links to the terms and conditions of the main social media accounts (TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram). We would ask that you are vigilant in checking who your child is 'friends' with on any social networking and gaming sites and to check that privacy settings have been activated. Some useful websites are:

- [The Parent Zone](#)
- [Think U Know](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Internet Matters](#)
- [Know It All Guide For Parents](#)
- [Digital Parenting by Vodafone](#)

In particular, the use of Snapchat and other similar social networking sites can lead to safeguarding issues for children. If your child is using Snapchat for messaging, or other social networking sites like WhatsApp, it is important to remember some key points:

- Know the terms and conditions of the site - is your child legally allowed to have an account?
- When messaging, your child needs to take extra care with what they are saying and what they are sharing. **If offensive, hurtful or inappropriate messages are brought to our attention, then these will be dealt with using our Behaviour Policy**

Use of Google Chromebooks - Year 7 and Year 8

The introduction of Chromebooks for Year 7 and Year 8 has been very successful, and has helped our children to further enhance their studies both in and out of school. Please continue to monitor your child's use of their Chromebook, **and be aware also that any misuse of the device will be dealt with in line with our Behaviour Policy.**

Sharing content/images/conversations online

Finally, it is important that both children and parents/carers are aware of the dangers of sharing content online. Websites such as Omegle allow anyone to converse with or share information with anyone online, which poses a particular safeguarding risk. By content, this can mean the sharing of images, videos and conversations online via social media. The sharing of sexual photos and videos by and of under-18s is illegal, including the 'screenshotting' of images and then passing them on. Similarly, a number of social media sites can potentially provide access to inappropriate material, especially from the age of 16 onwards. It is important that children are educated about the dangers of this material, and how they converse with each other online. In particular, children need to understand the importance of being respectful online, and avoiding personal/hurtful comments about other children and staff.



ST JAMES'
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Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me via email at s.guscott@stjamesheadle.co.uk

Yours faithfully

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With God
all things are possible

Matthew 19:26