

Water Primary School

Happiness, Health & Opportunity

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Headteacher: Miss E. McKay
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Dear Parents/Carers

Social Media use outside of school

I am writing to advise you of a few concerns that I have regarding the Year 6 children's use of social media outside of school, during evenings and weekends. I have been informed of a few issues where children are using abusive and threatening language on social media towards each other. Although this activity is not happening in school, it does affect behaviour, anxiety and subsequently lesson time and the learning of pupils in school. We cannot regulate the online access that pupils have outside school, but if an issue is reported to school, we have a duty of care to inform the parents of the children involved. This is leading to a lot of upset and division of some pupils within school and is not in line with our ethos or values.

There is clear guidance on the appropriate age ranges for certain online apps and I would like to draw your attention to these. WhatsApp announced a change to their terms and conditions for users based in Europe. Users need to be 16 to use WhatsApp. Nearly all other social media services require users to be at least 13 years of age to access and use their services. Whilst there is no age restriction for watching videos on YouTube, users need to be 13 or older to have their own YouTube account (enabling them to subscribe to other channels, like videos, post comments, share their own content and flag inappropriate content).

Once something has been posted on social media, it is very hard to get rid of. I would ask parents therefore, to be vigilant and monitor what children are posting online. What is right will vary from family to family but some strategies that are known to be successful include:

- Monitoring their phones for the apps that are downloaded
- Enacting parental controls on phones and consoles
- Reviewing the messages, they send on platforms and apps – making monitoring part of a daily or weekly routine
- Setting expectations about what space (preferably communal) and times they have access to devices
- Encouraging them to share or discuss with you what they are doing.

Whilst there are many benefits of these forms of communication, I am sure you would agree that it is important the children are safe and are free from any form of abuse in person or online. As a school, we will continue to work on online safety through our ICT and PSHE curriculum ensuring that children are fully aware of the risks of social media. I would greatly appreciate your support in this matter.

Many thanks,

Miss E. McKay