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Dear Parents / Carers

Social media advice for parents and carers

The last few weeks have seen changes to the way we all live our lives. As a result, children and young people may be spending more time on electronic devices and we are aware that some of our older children have their own phones and devices. Of course, the internet is a great source for information and education but with increased time online comes increased risk, so it is important to talk to children and young people to ensure they know the risks online, and where to go for help and support when needed. There is a lot of information out there and [The Children's Society](#) are a great source of information and tell us there are five points we should to children talk about:

1. **Different Identities** – Some people may pretend to be someone else online. It's easy to lie about age, gender, interests.
2. **Personal Data** – The risk of sharing personal data to anyone online (e.g. address photos, school, and bank details).
3. **Meeting people** – The dangers of planning to meet up with someone they met online in the real world at a future date. This might apply more to those of you who have teenage children.
4. **How to stay safe** – If the young person is planning to meet someone they met online at a future date, make sure they tell a trusted adult and know how to stay safe (applies as above).
5. **Stay curious** – Share the same curiosity for online friends as you would for offline friends.

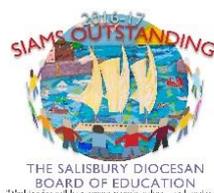
Staying Safe on Social Media

Check if your child is on social media and if what they see is age appropriate. Whether children and young people are using Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter or WhatsApp, it is important to speak to your child about the risks online and about not posting messages or chatting to someone online in anger or on impulse. Ask them to think before they post anything, as these messages (which could include inappropriate pictures and videos) are almost impossible to take back.

Whilst many of the posts are completely harmless and help us to feel connected, there are occasions when children or young people might post something which upsets someone else or even worse, post inappropriate and sometimes indecent images of themselves. This is putting them at risk, so it's also important to speak to them to understand why they have done this. It could be done out of naivety or it could be something more, like bullying or harassment and they will need your help in dealing with this.

One of the main social media platforms young people use today is Snapchat. This is an app, where people can upload a number of photos which disappear after an allotted time frame – it could be seconds or minutes. As Snapchat has grown over the years, there are some steps you can take to make sure you and your child stay extra safe:

1. **Snapchat etiquette:** be kind and respectful to other Snapchatters. Be thoughtful about what can be 'Snapped', and don't send people anything they you wouldn't want to receive.
2. **Snaps disappear, but ...:** remember, even though Snaps are designed to disappear, someone can still grab a screenshot or take a picture with another device.
3. **Privacy settings:** check the privacy settings to choose who can send Snaps or view Stories and location on Snap Map.
4. **Friends:** Snapchat was made for keeping in touch with close friends, so we strongly suggest against friending anyone you don't know in real life.



5. **Report safety concerns:** if your child comes across something upsetting, or if anyone asks them to do something inappropriate or that makes them uncomfortable, please report the Snap to Snapchat directly – and talk to your child about it.
6. **Bullying:** if someone is bullying or harassing your child, report the Snap directly to Snapchat. Make sure to block that person and leave any group chat where bullying is taking place. For help see Support for parents and carers below.
7. **Password security:** keep passwords safe and don't share with any other people. We also suggest using a different password for every service you use.
8. **Age minimum:** Most social media apps are made for people 13 and older and for good reason.

Sexual Images

We would hope and pray that this does not apply to any pupils but schools have been asked to remind parents that the law says that creating or sharing sexual images or videos of a child under 18 is illegal, even if the person doing it is under 18. This includes:

- Sending sexual messages to a child
- A child taking an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend
- Sharing an explicit image or video of a child, even if it's shared between children the same age
- Having, downloading or storing an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave their permission for it to be taken.
- If content is reported to police, they make a record and could investigate the circumstances.

Support for Parents and carers

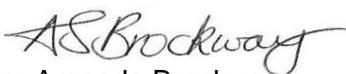
- CEOP's Thinkuknow (www.thinkuknow.co.uk) has online safety advice for parents, children and young people, including short videos to help parents understand why children send and receive inappropriate content and how to talk to them about it.
- Childline (www.childline.org.uk) offers advice on sexting and online safety.
- To understand what some of the messages are, The Children's Society have put together a helpful [slang dictionary](#) and [emoji dictionary](#) to unlock some of the codes young people may use.
- Contact www.ceop.police.uk if you are worried about a child sending naked images, videos or sexual messages.
- Report the image to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) on <https://report.iwf.org.uk/en>
- Make a report on the social media platform where the image or video is shared. To help, use www.net-aware.org.uk to learn more about what social platforms, apps and games are available for young people and how to report content.
- Common sense Media is a fantastic site for reviews about all kinds of apps. For example TikTok which is very popular. <https://www.common sense media.org/blog/parents-ultimate-guide-to-tiktok>

The most important thing is communication. Talk about how to treat others online with respect and what is and isn't appropriate online behaviour. Hopefully much of this online safety newsletter will not apply to your children. Hopefully they are remembering all that we have talked about in school about how to keep safe online. However, Wiltshire Council and the police have asked us to spread the word in order to help parents to keep their children safe online.

Online Safety Curriculum

CEOP provide great online safety learning resources for different ages which parents might find helpful. <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Support-tools/home-activity-worksheets/>

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Amanda Brockway
Headteacher

Some information provided by Wiltshire Council and also Superintendent Ben Mant, Wiltshire Police Public Protection Department

