



SHADE
Primary School



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Dear Parents,

I am writing to you about your children's digital lives. Over the period of lockdown learning, we noticed that more and more of our pupils have become frequent users of many different digital platforms – and not all of them are age appropriate.

I urge you to be vigilant and strict in your control of your child's access to digital content. Age restrictions are imposed for a reason **and if your child is on these apps and games, other users are going to assume they are older** (and more resilient) than they actually are.

However, I also know that the digital world seems irresistible to young people and that they may access apps and platforms before the stipulated age with, or even without, your consent. Please discuss with your children their **behaviour and choice of words when using digital apps**. They should be made to realise that **their digital footprint is traceable** and can crop up many years in the future – children naturally think they are untouchable, but this is not the case.

You should also discuss with your child what to do if their digital relationships are hurtful or harmful. **It is vital that your child knows how to screenshot** – so any issues can be reported with evidence. However tempting it is to just close a screen, or leave a group, a screenshot can be very helpful when investigating incidents.

This is a vast topic, that I cannot support you with in one letter, and so I would like to point you in the direction of **some materials to support you in developing your children's digital confidence, safety and resilience**.

The website [Parentzone](#) has lots of information to support you - I particularly like the article [The Five Digital Parenting Rules That Really Matter](#). The [Thinkuknow site](#) is also very helpful – in particular **there is a link button to report abuse or other issues online**.

Three issues that have particularly caught our attention in school are the use of TikTok, pupils' WhatsApp accounts, and a resurgence in popularity of Omegle:

TikTok is a platform for sharing videos – often with music or other soundtracks. We have seen accounts of Shade children from Year 3 upwards, some with children dancing to songs with explicit lyrics in scant outfits with no privacy settings on their content.

WhatsApp is a messaging app, which seems harmless, but we have seen the use of multiple groups and screenshots of other private conversations being shared. This can cause huge issues of unkind and bullying behaviour which children are reluctant to report to adults.

Omegle is an online chat room which has become popular again because it is currently used in TikTok videos. The twist is that you are randomly connected to users from across the world and there are many reports of sexual content and other inappropriate behaviour. To learn more about Omegle, see this [BBC News article](#)

Please monitor your children's digital activity carefully – **we recommend they only use devices with your knowledge and supervision and in communal areas of the home (NOT their bedrooms)**.

Let's all work to keep our children safe.
Best wishes

Justine Sutcliffe