ESAFETY – Instagram and Social Media Apps

It has come to our attention that some children have Instagram and other Social Media apps, even though the permitted minimum age to use the sites is 13 (according to the sites' terms and conditions). We are aware of several problems that have occurred with the children in our school as a result.

Silkstone Common J & I School is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet and as such we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern. Websites such as Instagram or Facebook 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:

- Instagram or Facebook use 'age targeted' advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts or a sexual or other inappropriate nature, depending on the age they stated they were when they registered.
- Children may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour.
- Language, games, photographs and content posted or shared on Instagram or Facebook is not moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children.
- 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.
- Instagram or Facebook cannot and does not verify its members therefore it is important to remember that if your child can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else!
- Inappropriate and unkind messages may be sent between peers – your child could be at risk of cyber bullying. This is especially true for apps such as 'WhatsApp' and 'Viber'.

We feel it important to point out to parents the risks of underage use of such sites, so you can make an informed decision as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not. We may, however, take action (such as reporting under-aged profiles) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety of wellbeing of any of our children.

Should you decide to allow your child to use Instagram or other Social Media apps we strongly advise you:

- 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 https://www.ceop.police.uk/ on their profile. This places a bookmark or 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 from Instagram etc.
- Set up your own profile so you understand how the site works and ask them to have you as a friend on their profile so you know what they are posting online

Make sure your child understands the following rules:
- Always keep your profile private
- Never accept friends you don't know in real life
- Never post anything which could reveal your identify
- 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'd recommend that all parents visit the 'CEOP Think U Know' website for more information on keeping your child safe online www.thinkuknow.co.uk