

Dear Parents and Carers,

Our children are living in a very technical world with a huge number of opportunities for communication with others. They do sometimes make mistakes. We have been made aware in the past of some issues over children composing or passing unpleasant messages using the following two apps on their smart phones or tablets. It is the rise in use of these devices that make the internet even more accessible for those who have access to them.



Snapchat 12yrs+: A photo sharing app for sending SMS photos. Users set the pictures to delete after a few minutes.

Dangers: Nasty comments can be sent and quickly fade away so that there is no evidence. At secondary school level Snapchat is being used for sexting and because it's so simple to do a screen capture on phones, photos can be copied. No parental controls. Photos are not really deleted they go into folders on the recipients phone, and a quick search on YouTube for a How-To-Find Snapchat Photos Tutorial can show you exactly how to retrieve them.



Instagram

Instagram 13yrs+: A public photo sharing app using your mobile devices camera. Public sharing on Instagram and other social networks. There is a privacy setting within Instagram, where you must approve followers, but you as the parent would have to supervise each follow.

Dangers: Stanger follows, if privacy setting not set. Location Service can be turned off and should be. Instagram have set a few filters on terms you can search for, including sex terms and drug terms, but they don't seem that successful; porn and drug pictures still appear. Abuse in comments. No parental controls. The danger is if one of the followers share your photo elsewhere, or your child gets bullied or bullies others with comments.

The advice from The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) is not necessarily to ban children from using apps but to teach them to use it safely.

1. Advise about the context of texts 'if you wouldn't say it/show it to your mum or your teacher, don't post it or write it to/about someone else'.
2. Occasionally check the messages your child is sending and receiving.
3. Teach them to 'screen shot' on their device so they can quickly grab unpleasant comments and show an adult.
4. Don't give out personal information such as phone number, address, school etc to people they don't know and trust.
5. Use the CEOP www.thinkuknow.co.uk website to find out more!

Regards

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Head of School