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Dear Parents/Carers

Internet Safety and the use of Social Media

As a school, we are committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet, both in school and at home. With this in mind, we are writing to share an issue which is of concern to us. It has come to our attention in the last week that some of the Year 6 pupils are making inappropriate use of social media platforms, including Instagram and Snapchat. This has included sending hurtful messages to their peers.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that the age restriction for both Instagram and Snapchat, along with many other platforms, is 13. There is an ever-increasing amount of research that shows the effects social media can have on children's mental wellbeing, with it impacting negatively on many aspects including sleep, self-esteem and mental health.

We understand our children are growing up surrounded by ever-changing technologies and that, as adults, it can be challenging to keep up with the ways in which the children are choosing to interact and communicate using these technologies. As a school, we try to equip the pupils with the knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, whilst also being able to benefit from the fantastic opportunities technology offers for communication and social connections.

As a year group, we will be revisiting e-safety on Thursday this week, allowing us the opportunity to reiterate key messages and to discuss the ways in which the children can keep themselves safe and happy online. The key messages will include:

* respecting the age restrictions put in place by social media platforms (**for Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube and Skype, you are required to be at least 13 before you create an account; for WhatsApp, you are required to be 16**);

* always keeping profiles private, ensuring that the security settings are set as high as possible;

* only accepting friend requests from people you know in real-life;

* never posting anything you wouldn't be happy for your parents or teachers to see;

* always telling an adult if you feel threatened or if someone upsets you;

* remembering the SMART rules (Safe, Meeting, Accessible, Reliable, Tell).

As a parent, we would suggest that you discuss these issues of internet safety with your children on a regular basis, in addition to monitoring their internet use. Some websites which you might find useful are:

https://www.net-aware.org.uk A guide for parents to enable you to stay up-to-date with the social networks children may be using. It contains information on all the different social media platforms available.

https://www.bbc.com/ownit A website aimed at children aged 12 and under to enable them to stay safe online.

Thank you for your support with this matter. If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Caroline Morgan and Sheena Taylor
Year 6 Team

'Inspiring everyone, learning together, achievement for all'