



25th September 2023

Dear Families

As a school we are becoming increasingly aware of pupils using social media and messaging apps on devices such as phones, tablets and computers. Such apps can be extremely difficult for our pupils, who are still developing their social skills, to navigate successfully. This is one of the reasons why the developers of the apps set age requirements to use their app. Below, are the age requirements for some popular apps among children and teenagers:

Age Restrictions for Social Media Platforms

What is the minimum age for account holders on these social media sites and apps?



Sourced from NSPCC website October 2019

WhatsApp Age requirement: 16 years +



What is WhatsApp? It is an instant messaging app which lets you send messages, images and videos in one-to-one and group chats with your contacts. You can choose to share your live location for up to eight hours with one contact or a group.

Concerns

- Location can be shared with contacts
- Pictures, voice notes and videos can be sent. Once this is done, the sender no longer has control over that content, it can be shared and passed on forever!

Example: If a pupil makes a mistake and is unkind to a person face to face, it will most likely eventually be forgotten and the friendship can move on. If they are unkind over a social media app and the content still exists and is continuously shared, the friendship can be tainted by the act for a very long time and may never recover.



TikTok Age requirement? 13 years +

What is TikTok? It is a Chinese video-sharing social networking service owned by ByteDance. It is used to create short music, lip-sync, dance, comedy and talent videos of 3 to 15 seconds, and short looping videos of 3 to 60 seconds.

Concerns

- Anyone can post content meaning a lot of content is unsuitable for children to see
- Anyone can see the videos which are posted by you. Pupils can gain the attention of people they do not know, which can jeopardise their safety
- Anything posted on TikTok can be recorded and shared by others, even if you decide to delete it afterwards
- Again, primary school pupils can find it very difficult to successfully use their empathy to avoid cyber bullying on such sites.

Example: there is a big difference between calling someone stupid on a playground (an unkind statement during an argument) and posting a video talking about how stupid the person is, online for all to see (cyber bullying) - a distinction that some pupils struggle to understand. So please, if you have not done so already, click on the link attached to the letter, and find out all the ways you can support your child with their online presence. The link takes you to a site run by the NSPCC. Its guidance includes: - how to put parental controls on apps - how to deal with exposure to indecent content - how to talk to children about online safety - and much more.

What we are doing at school to help?

Our On line Safety Curriculum and PSHE and SRE Curriculums for Years 5 and 6 works on developing social skills such as empathy, as well as developing an understanding of the world we live in - including online safety.

- We have informed pupils that they should not be accessing apps which have an age requirement that they do not meet
- We are inviting our local community officer in to speak to our Year 5 & 6 pupils about cyber bullying
- As part of our Safeguarding policy, we remain committed to referring any child protection issue which arises from the inappropriate use of social media and messaging apps to the relevant external agencies

- Despite it occurring outside school, if a situation of cyber bullying occurs between our pupils, we will investigate and assist in remedying situations
- We have a duty to refer any situation that we believe constitutes a crime to the police

Parents and Carers are in the best position to stop Cyber bullying from happening:

1. Please do not allow your child to use apps if they do not meet the age requirement
2. Monitor the use of apps and devices in your household
3. Set up parent locks on apps you do not want your children to use
4. Talk to your children about on-line safety.

Information to support you with all of the above can be found here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/> We also have lots of useful links on our school website to help support you in keeping your child safe online.

<https://www.stoswaldsschool.co.uk/page/?title=Online+Safety&pid=90>

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky Wood". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'B' and 'W'.

Becky Wood

Online safety Lead and Head Teacher