



Tuesday 21st March 2017

Dear Parents/Carers,

Over the last few months, we have experienced an increasing amount of issues with some children during school time, due to them being unkind and in some cases inappropriate to each other on social media sites outside of school hours. We are aware that some of our parents/carers are of the same mind as us and have expressed concerns in this area also.

Obviously, in school, the children are taught about the issues that can be experienced when they are online and accessing social media sites, and the danger that they can put themselves in. However, whilst we realise that social media has a place in today's society, sadly some pupils are still choosing to make wrong choices and in some cases are putting themselves at risk.

Many of the issues we are currently experiencing are as a result of children being exposed/having access to, a number of social media sites including Snapchat; Facebook; Instagram; Whatsapp etc. These issues include lack of sleep, which is affecting learning and motivation to learn; social interaction with peers and adults and major friendship issues, not only between children but more recently, also their parents. Our WJS Pastoral team, together with other staff members, are spending significant periods of time investigating issues arising from inappropriate comments; group chats and a blatant disregard of others feelings. This is having a huge impact on the self-esteem of those involved and in some cases approaching crisis point. We can all perhaps, be a little naïve as to how social platforms create vulnerability for all society and especially our children.

The welfare of your children is of paramount importance to us, as well as yourselves, and as you already know, we really appreciate how much you, as parents/carers, work with us in school to safeguard your child in all areas. I am therefore writing today to ask for your continued support in this 'social media' issue. As advocated by e-safety experts, we would like to suggest a variety of actions that you might take to ensure that your child is not exposed to/part of any further unpleasantness.

- Parental settings on **all** devices ie phones; tablets; laptops; apps etc
- Restrict access to such devices eg switching off devices well before bedtime as it is a known fact that such devices stimulate the brain, and have a detrimental effect on sleep
- Ensure children are only accessing age appropriate sites, games and apps ie Facebook should only be accessed by 13 years old and over. Care should be taken when older siblings are accessing such sites/games/apps when other younger children are in the vicinity

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- Monitor any social interaction by your child, including text messages sent and received, for appropriate use
- Use parent/carer emails when setting up new accounts, which will enable the adults to receive any relevant notifications and monitor the account
- Be aware that some apps, once messages/photographs are sent, only have a limited time to view eg snapchat
- Ensure your child understands that nothing can ever be completely deleted once it has been posted online – ‘think before you click’
- Screen shots can be passed on to anyone, anywhere
- Reinforce to your child that they should never disclose/share any personal information/photographs online and be aware of the necessary measures they should take if they feel unsafe or need to report anything inappropriate ie press the report button available on any media site; block/remove themselves from inappropriate persons/situations; tell a trusted adult

Obviously, these are just well intended suggestions and we are most certainly not telling you how to parent your child; we are simply taking as many steps as possible to address this increasingly problematic issue and as a school we would like to be able to concentrate on the core purpose of teaching and learning, thus enabling your child to achieve their full potential. We realise that issues surrounding the use of social media in our society will continue to rear their heads, however, as you can appreciate, we would like to keep this to a minimum in school. Through working together we can continue to provide as safe an environment as possible for your child in and out of school.

If you would welcome any support in activating any of the above mentioned e-safety strategies, please do not hesitate to contact school where we have several members of staff on hand who will be pleased to help you. Additionally, there are some useful links on our school website www.wintertonjuniors.co.uk for both parents/carers and children.

Many thanks for your continued support.

Kind regards,

Mrs Cathy Logan
Headteacher

Winterton Junior School

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