



Dear Parents,

Thank you for taking the time, at home, to speak with your children regarding online safety and security. Since I sent out my last message to you all, via the school app on Tuesday, some parents and carers have contacted school to inform us that they have found some inappropriate content in Facebook messenger and WhatsApp that really did frighten and alarm the parents and carers.

We have been talking to all children in school today about the key issues around internet safety. Children in P1 – P3 had small, group chats in their classroom at a level appropriate to them. Children in P4 – P7 attended an additional internet and cyber safety assembly this morning.

The internet is fantastic, amazing and wonderful, however, we are in danger of allowing the power of gaming, social media and peer pressure to take control of our children's lives.

The biggest threat to our children is not on the roads, or in stranger danger, it is in their bedrooms on their smart phones, tablets and games consoles.

One good starting point would be to ensure that children do not have access to games or apps that have age restrictions above their actual age. The restrictions are there for good reason. 18 means 18!

Children's phones etc. should be put away and put off at bedtime. Good sleep is so important to children's development and learning capacity.

Whilst I am not in favour of schools acting as the world's policeman, I respectfully, and in all sincerity, suggest that it is irresponsible for any parent to allow their children to play such games, to download/use such apps, or to watch such films. Although we will always support our children in school when an area of concern is brought to our attention and we will continue to provide children with advice and guidance in a preventative way, we are increasingly having to deal with very serious issues involving children accessing messaging and social media platforms that have minimum age restrictions above that of the children in school. I would urge all parents and carers to remove children's access to these platforms. Please be aware that I am speaking from experience. Unfortunately, during my time as a teacher, I have had to deal with the consequences of a pupil being groomed online and I will do everything in my power to ensure that no child will go through that trauma again.

Today we have given the following advice to our pupils:

- Not to click on pop ups. If pop ups appear, tell mum or dad.
- Not to click on pop ups stating they have won a prize. There is no prize!
- Not to download apps, or to purchase game time without parental permission.
- Only to play shared games online with their existing friends.
- Not to accept friendship requests outside of their existing friendship group.
- To treat unsolicited friendship requests as stranger requests. BLOCK and TELL



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- To immediately BLOCK anyone who asks them to keep a secret from their parents and to immediately TELL THEIR PARENTS.
- Not to share information with people they don't know. (Age, address etc)
- We explained that children should never be afraid of telling mums or dads if pop ups appear etc. Mums and dads will not be cross and will be glad that they have spoken up. Our children must have confidence that they can talk to us about any subject, even if they have made a mistake, or clicked on something inappropriate.
- To take back power over apps by BLOCKING and TELLING.
- When we BLOCK and TELL we stay safe, we prove we are strong and take away the power of the APP. These apps can only harm us when we open them and engage with them. BLOCK and TELL
- In group chats if a member of their friendship group is being mean, bullying, using bad language or speaking inappropriately, they should be told to stop and if they don't they should be removed from the group.
- To remember that what is said in chats or online cannot be deleted.
- Not to share inappropriate photographs of themselves or others in chats or online.

Together as parents and teachers we must educate and empower our children so that they can reap all of the benefits of new technology whilst remaining safe.

Once again, I thank you all for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Mr C. Fulton
Principal