



Ark Dickens Primary Academy

6th February 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

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 are 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.

Detail about two apps we believe are popular amongst our pupils:

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 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. Up to 256 people can be in one group chat. As we stated above our pupils are still developing their social skills. At the moment their empathy is at a level where they cannot read situations over group messaging as well as they would face to face. This results in results – who would never be involved in an act of bullying in person – being more likely to participate in cyber bullying.

Example:

- 6 pupils are in a WhatsApp group together.
- Two pupils have had a disagreement in school.
- One pupil makes an unkind comment about the others in the WhatsApp group.
- The rest of the group join in by adding comments, agreeing, or sharing laughing emojis etc.
- On a playground the pupils would see this as 5 pupils versus 1, read the situation using their empathy and stop. On a messaging app they find it more challenging to make the connections.

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.

What are we doing in school to help?

Our Pastoral Curriculum for Year 6 works on developing social skills such as empathy, as well as developing an understanding of the world we live in – including e-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 students, we will use the full extent of our behaviour policy to remedy 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:

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

With half term just round the corner, we wanted to share this information with you so all families can be extra vigilant and aware of the content children have access to online. If you'd like any additional information or support for any Online Safety concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch. You may also find it beneficial to read the National Online Safety 'What Parents Need To Know' guide:

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/wakeupwednesday/squidgame-trending-across-platforms-what-parents-need-to-know>

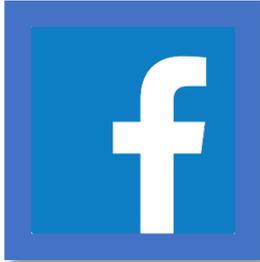
Kind regards,

Mrs L Berry



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Online information for Parents



Facebook:

A social networking site. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.



Snapchat:

An online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.



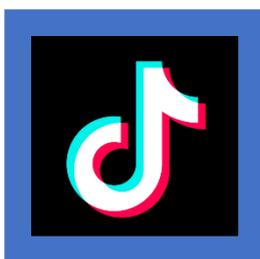
Instagram:

An online photo/video sharing and social networking service which enables it's users to take pictures/videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.



WhatsApp:

An instant messaging app for smartphones. The user agreement requires users to be 16 years +. Children are often creating "groups" to which others are joining. This means that all information is shared with anyone who is in the group.



TikTok:

A video-sharing social networking service. It is used to create short lip-sync, comedy and talent videos. You are required to be at least 13 years old to create an account.

Key advice for children:

When using the internet:

- Always respect others on and offline - think about what you say online and what images you send/post; be aware that online messages can easily be misunderstood.
- Remember that anything you publish online can be made public very quickly and you will never be sure who may have seen it.
- Treat your password like a toothbrush; never share it with anyone and only give your personal information like mobile phone number or email address to trusted friends.

If you are being bullied online:

- Learn how to block or report online bullies or anyone behaving badly and don't retaliate or reply to nasty messages! Remember that if you reply with a nasty or unkind comment then it could get you into trouble too.
- Always make sure you tell someone if you are being bullied online: Tell an adult trust, the website/app/mobile phone provider where the bullying is taking place, If a crime has been committed or someone is at risk of harm, contact the police.

Also remember that if you see cyberbullying going on, then support the person and REPORT it to the website or your school. Don't be a bystander and say nothing, otherwise you become part of the problem.

Key advice for parents:

- Talk to your child and understand how they are using the internet and their phone.
- Communication with your child is essential. Talk to them and reassure them that they can always come to you if something upsets or worries them online.
- Use safety tools and parental controls - if you're not sure how, contact your service provider but please note that these tools are not always 100% effective.
- Be alert to your child being upset after using the internet/phones.
- Model positive online behaviour for your child. It's important that they know how to act safely and responsibly online and are aware of what content is acceptable and unacceptable to post or share.

If your child is being bullied online:

- Remind your child not to retaliate to any cyberbullying.
- Report cyberbullying immediately: Contact the service provider (e.g the website, gaming, or mobile phone company) to report the user and to remove the content.
- If the bullying is serious and a potential criminal offence has been committed, then consider contacting the police.