

Bird's Bush Primary School

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Part of Perry Hall Multi-Academy Trust
Company Number:
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Re: Internet Safety and the use of Social Media

Dear Parents/Carers,

Bird's Bush Primary School is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet and as such we feel it is our responsibility to raise with you our growing concerns about the increase in inappropriate use of Tik Tok, Snap Chat, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and other social media and 'chat' sites.

Many of the issues that have been brought to our attention recently have involved the use of these sites which are deemed as not age appropriate. All web sites have an age restriction rating – like films and games. None of the social media sites are rated for under the age of 13, therefore NONE of the children at our school should have accounts on these sites.

Despite this, we are well aware that many of the children in Year 5 and 6 and younger, do have accounts on these sites. If used appropriately, with parental supervision, they are a good way of keeping in touch with family and friends and have been very useful during lockdown where we have been kept apart.

It has come to the point where we are dealing with social media issues on a day-to-day basis. This is impacting on vital learning time as well as the mental health and wellbeing of children in school.

Below we have outlined just a few of the 'issues/concerns' that have arisen in the past couple of weeks alone:

1. Children have been contacted by people that they do not know and can 'follow' strangers online. This is potentially very dangerous. Users can pretend to be anyone that they want; users have been known to use fake photographs and falsify their ages in order to hide their true identity. Some children, particularly those with low self-esteem or SEN can see these online 'friends' as real friends and can be easily led into vulnerable conversations and situations.
2. Children have been using social media at inappropriate times, we have evidence showing that some of our children have sent messages in the early hours of the morning. We advise that no child has access to any electronic devices within their bedroom, particularly at night time when it is extremely difficult to monitor. Children are most vulnerable when they are using their devices in private areas such as their bedrooms.
3. Children are sending and receiving an incredible a number of messages and in some cases children are switching on their devices to find that they have over a thousand notifications! Often these notifications are due to private conversations between just two people and/or conversations with no purpose e.g. silly images, singular words and emojis. We advise that if children need to contact each other directly that they do so through other means e.g. a text message or a telephone call. We have found that these group chats lead to arguments and disagreements amongst our children as they become involved with discussions which they did not need to be part of.
4. Children are misinterpreting some messages that they read and then fall out and have disagreements with their friends and others pass on messages that were intended for a private conversation. We always tell the children that they should not message anything they would not say to someone's face, you cannot hide behind social media!
5. Children are watching and even creating videos which have inappropriate language or images in them – particularly on Tik Tok! We advise that content restrictions are set as high as possible to avoid seeing things they shouldn't see and parents should check what they are posting.

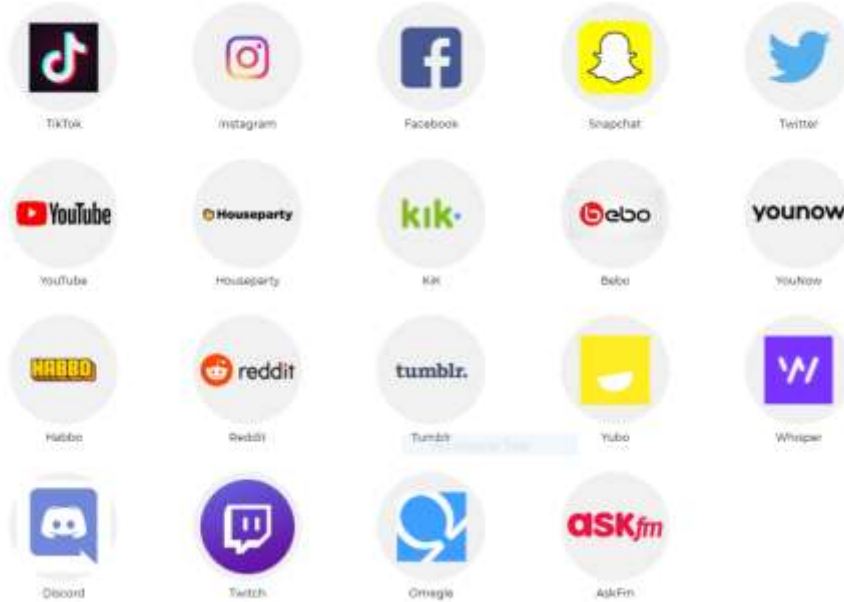
Although we are constantly educating children about the importance of using the internet safely, we do not have the time, staff or responsibility to resolve every issue that takes place out of school hours – it is a parental responsibility; we talk

about internet safety regularly in school and the children can tell us what they know – we cannot enforce this when they leave for the day!

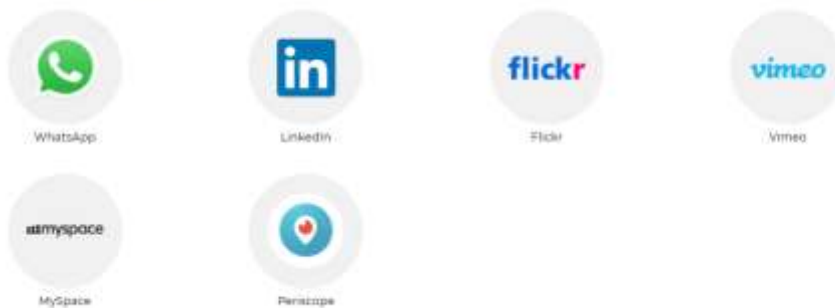
In order to maintain the safety of all of our children it is vitally important that we work together to raise awareness and increase understanding of the potential dangers in this area. All of the reported incidents happen at home, after school hours when children have access to web sites that are blocked in school. We cannot control your child's social media use and it is not our responsibility to police this or resolve all of the incidents that then spill over into school – children have missed so much time already without more time being taken away from learning time.

Age restrictions for some of the most popular sites:

13 year olds and upwards



16 year olds and upwards



We need your help to support children to use social media responsibly. There are lots of useful websites out there to help parents learn more about how to protect children and use the internet responsibly.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/what-age-can-my-child-start-social-networking/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

We urge you to monitor your child's internet usage and help them to use the internet responsibly and help us to keep the focus in school on learning.

Regards
Sharon Barnes
Headteacher