3rd May 2022

Dear Parent / Carer,

Social Media and online safety

Ofcom have recently produced a report into media use, attitudes and understanding among children and young people aged 3-17. It also includes findings on parents' views about their children's media use, and how parents of children and young people aged 3-17 monitor and manage their children's use.

Key points from the report include:

- Nearly all children went online in 2021 (99%); the majority used a mobile phone (72%) or tablet (69%) to do so.
- Using video-sharing platforms (VSPs) such as YouTube or TikTok was the most popular online activity among children aged 3-17 (95%).
- Among all types of online platforms, YouTube was the most widely used by children; 89% used it, compared to half using TikTok. But TikTok was more popular than YouTube for posting content.
- A majority of children under 13 had their own profile on at least one social media app or site; 33% of parents of 5-7s said their child had a profile, and 60% of 8-11s said they had one.
- Just four in ten parents of 3-17s knew the minimum age requirement for using most social media; 42% correctly said 13. Four in ten parents of 8-11-year-olds said they would allow their child to use social media (38%).
- Six in ten children aged 3-17 played games online in 2021, increasing to three-quarters of 12 - 17s.
- More than a third of 8-17s who gamed online played with people they didn't know (36%); overall, 16% of 8-17s chatted to people they didn't know, via the messaging/ chat functions in games.
- Children were more likely to experience being bullied via technology than face-to-face: 84% of 8-17s said they had been bullied this way (i.e., via text or messaging, on social media, in online games, through phone or video calls, or via other aps and sites) compared to 61% being bullied face-to-face.

You can download the report here: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/childrens/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2022

As a school, we sometimes are asked by parents about comments which have been made outside of school and placed in an online forum. These incidents can be very tricky to deal with as we have no control over social media platforms and use. If

problems are likely to affect children within school then we would ask you to inform us directly. However, if there are any comments or posts that you or your child find offensive, our advice is to report these to the relevant authorities and consider blocking the relevant person.

Our advice with regards to age restrictions is that it's always better to wait until the required age to join any social media service. These rules around age relate to privacy, but also are relevant to safety. Some services offer additional protection for users who are registered as under 18, and by supplying a fake age young people can potentially lose some of this protection. Young people also risk being exposed to content which is intended for older users when they use sites that are not designed for people their age. Additionally, if a service finds out a user is underage then they may delete the user's account and any content which has been shared. The link below will give you clear guidance regarding the age rating of specific online platforms.

https://www.woodnewtonalc.com/safeguarding-info/

We know that social media services are popular with young people of all ages. Parents have an important role in helping prepare their children to go online before they start to use social media platforms. Together you can look at the key things they need to know about staying safe online, critical thinking, and the safety settings that are available to them.

When looking at creating a profile online with your child, have a discussion as a family and make this decision together – talk about why they want the account and ensure that any family members using social media know what tools are available to help them stay safe. You may want to use our family agreement to support with this.

Finally, we would like to highlight the emergence of an online character seemingly created to be child friendly. However, there has been much concern around its rise, particularly on YouTube. Many schools have noticed an increase in the number of children talking about Huggy Wuggy. The character is not very nice to look at, with big sharp teeth. To younger children, it does look scary.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with our safeguarding team should you have any concerns or further questions. We appreciate your support

Adam Palmer - Deputy Headteacher