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May 2021

The Use of Social Media

Dear Parents and Carers,

Today's young people are growing up in an increasingly complex world, living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks.

At Mersey Vale Primary school we are committed to working with our parents and guardians to ensure our children are safe both on and offline.

As our society becomes more technology based, we understand that the use of social media is central to the lives of many young people. In school, we work to build resilience in all our pupils to help them both embrace the digital era and protect themselves online. We place much emphasis on respect, dignity and inclusion throughout our curriculum and underline the importance of these values when educating our children about the use of technology.

Most social media sites set an age restriction for users of their site, for example Avakin Life (13+), WhatsApp (16+), TikTok and Snapchat (13+). However there is no verification and we know some young people often ignore the terms and conditions of use, unaware of the risks it might pose.

Pupils could be putting themselves and others at risk by:

- Not knowing who they are talking to
- Uploading inappropriate content
- Posting photos and material which could damage their own or others reputations
- Posting inappropriate comments and pictures on other peoples' profiles that are humiliating or result in bullying
- Creating false profiles and accepting friend requests or engaging with people they do not know.

In the interest of safeguarding and the online world, we would recommend the following:



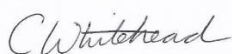
- ✓ Have a conversation with your child about appropriate use, including the impact of 'peer pressure' when with friends, how anonymous or instantaneous online communication can change behaviours and online 'stranger danger' can occur.
- ✓ Ensure your child understands how their actions can affect others and the impact it may have on individuals both mentally and emotionally.
- ✓ Remind your child that things posted or said online forms part of their digital footprint.
- ✓ If you choose to allow your child to use online social networking sites, set privacy settings and block anonymous posts
- ✓ Encourage your child to tell you or school about anything which makes them feel 'uncomfortable'
- ✓ Refrain from posting anything which could damage reputations or be considered offensive, inappropriate or illegal
- ✓ Report and block any activity which is inappropriate or risky

The online world develops and changes at great speed. New opportunities, challenges and risks are appearing all the time. This can make it difficult for parents to stay up to date with the latest devices, platforms, apps, trends and related threats.

Please do not hesitate to discuss any concern with us in school or if you prefer, consult the following for further advice, or visit our school website.

- ✓ <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/> - Among other useful features, this website, with multi-lingual options, provides a detailed look at many of the online apps that are available for children today. It provides a safety rating for each app by analysing its safety features, privacy and location features, reporting and blocking features and content.
- ✓ <https://www.saferinternetday.org/resources> - This website offers a variety of child friendly resources on how to stay safe online.
- ✓ www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents - This website provides parents and carers with information and resources about keeping their child safe online, including conversation starters and video guides.
- ✓ www.childnet.com - A website with the aim of helping to make the internet a great and safe place for children. It offers advice, tips and resources for parents and carers, teachers and young people.
- ✓ <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> - CEOP is a law enforcement agency and is there to help keep children and young people safe from sexual abuse and grooming online.

Yours sincerely,



Miss Whitehead
Head Teacher



Mr Aspinall
PSHE Leader