

20th May 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

Vernon Park 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 this particular issue as a growing concern, due to the increase in inappropriate use of Snapchat, TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and other social media sites.

Recently we have had a number of concerns brought to our attention that have caused children to feel unsafe, victimised, left out and worried. While these issues have arisen online out of school hours, they have had an impact on the relationships and learning in school.

Many of these issues have involved the use of:

- Snapchat - An online photo and video sharing networking service which enables its users to share videos and pictures. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.
- TikTok - an online video sharing networking site. 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 age 16 or older.
- Instagram - an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service which enables its users to take pictures and 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.
- Facebook - a social networking site. You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.

It is very important that we all work closely together to ensure that children are equipped to use social media (and the internet in general) safely and responsibly. While we cannot enforce that age restrictions are abided by, we would ask that parents be extra vigilant of your child's use of social media in its many different and ever growing forms.

Additional information about many of these apps can be found here:

<https://www.netaware.org.uk/networks/whatsapp/> and www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Although we cannot govern matters occurring out of school hours - which is parental responsibility - we will continue to support all our families to keep all our children safe. We will take action (such as reporting under age profiles) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our pupils, including reporting the use of inappropriate images of young people to the police, as this is a legal matter. This also refers to inappropriate text messages.

If you have any questions or queries then please do not hesitate to contact the school. We hope that we can all work together to ensure all our pupils feel safe and happy.

Many Thanks

Claire Lee
Head Teacher