Safer Social Media Use

How can we support our children to work safely online?

What apps does your child have on their phone or computer?

Do you know what your child is doing on their phone?

- When a young person receives their first mobile phone, the extent of opportunities at their fingertips is overwhelming.

- They are being trusted to use a potentially dangerous tool without much training or regulation.

- When used appropriately, social media is vitally useful and empowering. However, when used inappropriately, it can cause distress and concern for those involved.

Some Common Apps

- Snapchat – this is an app where users can post pictures to their followers for a specified short time limit, and the image then disappears. However, this does not stop the receiver from taking a screen shot.

- Whatsapp – this is a group messaging app where users can talk to multiple people at once (as long as they accept the invitation into the group chat). This can become particularly overwhelming in large groups where mass of content is not regulated.

- Instagram – an app for posting images to followers and observing images of others on your timeline. This can increase social pressures as only the 'highlight reel' is being displayed.

What are the current trends?

- Disrespectful behaviour – because users are disengaged from the people on the receiving end, they are more likely to engage in disrespectful behaviour.

- Chain letters – these are recordings or long lines of text that threaten the user to either pass it on or something terrible will happen to them.

- Spamming – users are posting masses of messages or images to group chats to prevent the main message of the chat reaching all users.

Social Aspects of Reading School ICT Systems

Our PSHE programme includes appropriate use of IT and social media, as well as how to stay safe online. Every student has access to the following, and has been trained if they are expected to use it:

- Microsoft teams – teams of subject classes of boys are created where homework can be posted/submitted and discussions can occur between teachers & pupils.
- Sharepoint discussions – this allows pupils to post to each other, and involve teachers, in discussions about particular subjects.
- Email – pupils are taught how to contact each other an teachers appropriately via their personal school email account.

What can you do?

- **Set up PINs on your TV service**
- **Get clued up about the social media sites children are using.** Minimum age requirements: WhatsApp is 13. NetAware, the NSPCC's guide to social media sites.
- **Install content filters to protect the devices in your home**. Your internet service provider can provide you with information on how to set up content filters.
- **Talk to your children about staying safe online**
- See Childnet's conversation starters or the NSPCC's ShareAware site for tips and ideas
- **Be aware of cyber-bullying.** www.beatbullying.org, www.childline.org.uk www.childnet.org
- **Help your children to spot a fake news story.** The Full Fact Toolkit can help your child to separate fact from fiction.

Know what your child is doing online

- Ensure you have open and honest conversations about their behaviour (encourage integrity – doing the right thing even when a grown up is not looking).

- At some point, all children will make a mistake. They should know they have your support to make a positive change when they do.