Wordsworth Primary and Nursery School

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Snapchat and WhatsApp

There has been an increase in inappropriate use of online platforms such as Snapchat and WhatsApp in Year 6.

Examples of misuse are:

- Videoing or voice recording other people without their consent.
- Snapchat instant messaging of offensive or upsetting messages with often inappropriate connotations.
- Creating groups, including older siblings and excluding children from these groups as a form of bullying.

We provide a comprehensive in depth PSHE curriculum, which you can find further details about on our website for Year R through to Year 6. We are addressing the above examples inhouse and the children have received an additional PSHE assembly on appropriate use of these platforms.

Key information given to the children today are:

- Snapchat is a popular messaging app which allows you to send messages or videos to other users. They are known as Snaps and are only available for a short period of time and can only be viewed once, however, if the recipient takes a screenshot or a video of it, it can be shared multiple times.

The age rating for Snapchat is 13+ and the WhatsApp age rating is 16+. As a community, can we work together to keep our children safe online.

As always, if you have any further suggestions or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of the Year 6 team and we thank you for your ongoing support in this matter.

Best wishes,

Miss Hastings
Year 6 Phase Lead

The following information is on the NSPCC website as to the age restriction of these apps and the way in which they are used and what steps you can take to keep your children safe:

WhatsApp: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/2023-01-12-is-whatsapp-safe-for-my-child/

Tips to help keep your child safe on WhatsApp

Get to know privacy settings

There are four main settings that you can use to help your child control who can see their information:

1. Everyone – allows all users to see your profile photo, about or status.
2. My contacts – only allows people from your phone contacts to see your profile photo, about, status, last seen and online.
3. My contacts except… – allows you to exclude certain people in your phone contacts from seeing your information.
4. Nobody – doesn't allow anyone to see your information.

The default setting on WhatsApp is 'everyone' but you can help your child to set their privacy controls by clicking the 'settings' cog and selecting 'privacy'. Here you can select each type of information and change it to the setting that you want.

To prevent children being added to groups by people they don't know, we recommend changing the group settings to 'My contacts except' and using the tick icon to select all contacts. This option means only your child's phone contacts, except those you exclude, can add your child to groups. But by selecting all contacts, it means that nobody can add your child to a group chat without first sending them an invitation.

In the same section, you can also switch off 'read receipts', which means other people cannot see when you have read their message. This might help if your child is feeling under pressure to respond to messages.

Make use of safety features

Show your child how to block and report other users of the app or inappropriate content. For information on how to block or report on WhatsApp visit: How to block and report contacts | WhatsApp Help Center.

Talk about sharing

Talk to your child regularly about what they should and shouldn't share with others on WhatsApp. You can read more about this here: Social media | NSPCC

Remind your child that, even if they think what they are sending will stay private, others might save, forward or screenshot it. Talk to them about making sure others are comfortable with what they are sending and let them know they can come to you if they are worried about something they have shared on the app.

Set rules about location sharing

Decide with your child if it is appropriate for them to share their location with others and who they are allowed to share it with. You can disable location permissions by going into your device settings and switching off location services for WhatsApp.

Snapchat: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/is-snapchat-safe-for-my-child/

Tips to help keep your child safe on Snapchat

1. Make sure they sign up with the correct age

Set up your child's Snapchat account together to make sure they sign up with correct age. This will automatically enable settings that help to limit unwanted contact from adults and access to certain features.

2. Talk to them about how to feel good on social media

Children and young people can face lots of different pressures online. Use Childline's advice about How to feel good on social media to help give them the tools to manage their wellbeing online.

3. Set rules around friends

Before your child starts using the app, talk to them about who they can be friends with on the app. Tell them to come to you if they receive a friend request from someone they don't know.

4. Know where to report

There is a chance that your child could come across inappropriate or upsetting content on Snapchat. If this happens, you should report it to the platform. To report a Snap or a story, press and hold on it, then select 'Report Snap'.

5. Talk about what is ok / not ok to share

Ensure that your child knows what personal and private information is, and what is, and is not, appropriate to share online.