

10th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

Safeguarding Concerns:

In the last two weeks, we have been made acutely aware of some online activities that are putting children at risk.

We have been alerted to some specific incidents affecting children in our schools regarding external hacking of some online applications and games that children are using at home. Those who would seek to harm children are making the most of the period of lockdown to increase their grooming activities. There has been a significant increase of such activity. Police are actively investigating these concerns.

We are encouraging you to be actively alert to the online activities your children are involved in. Please ensure you encourage your children to tell you what they are doing and to make sure they tell you if anything is unusual or odd. If you are made aware of anything untoward, please do let your headteacher know. We can then share information with other parents in order to protect all the children.

Currently, the applications in question are: Snapchat, Omegle and Roblox.

Snapchat has a **13+** age restriction and an account needs to be set up. Omegle has a **13+** age restriction and asks users under **18** to only access the site with parental permission/guidance. However, there is no registration process or age verification and so users simply click a button to chat.

In the Roblox game it appears that players are enticed to engage with a stranger using virtual gifts. One of these gifts is a camera, which when opened, takes them to a private 'server' area. Players are then sent a camera which takes a photo immediately when 'clicked on' or opened. Children are gradually encouraged to upload indecent images of themselves, which is also shared to players.

Further guidance on how to keep your child safe online is available on your school websites. thinkyouknow.co.uk and saferinternet.org.uk provide helpful advice to parents.

We all tend to think it won't happen to us, to our children, but it can, and for a couple of families, it has. Please be vigilant.

With all best wishes

Donna Bryant