

ST. ANNE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

FREE PRAE ROAD, CHERTSEY, SURREY KT16 8ET

Tel: 01932 562251 / 562366

e-mail: office@stannes-chertsey.surrey.sch.uk

www.stannescps.eschools.co.uk

Leanne M Harris B.A. (Hons)

Headteacher



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Dear Parents

St Anne's Catholic Primary School is fully committed to safeguarding all of our children and this includes promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet. As such, we feel it is our responsibility to remind you of issues surrounding the use of social media sites by primary age children.

We are aware that children in our school may be accessing the following sites:

- **TikTok:** (previously music.ly) a social media platform for creating, sharing and discovering short music videos. People use TikTok as an outlet to express themselves through singing, dancing, comedy, and lip-syncing. The app allows users to create videos and share them across the TikTok community. **To be eligible to sign up for this service, you must be at least 13 years of age.**
- **YouTube:** is a place to watch, create and share videos. You can create your own YouTube account, make a music playlist and create your own channel, which means you will have a public profile, and it allows you to comment on videos and create video playlists. For younger children there is a separate YouTube for Kids site, with child friendly videos <https://www.youtube.com/kids/>
In order to create a YouTube account and post your own videos, you must be at least 13 years old. However, it is possible to watch videos without registering an account.
- **Snapchat:** a messaging app which allows users to share photos, texts and videos, ie. 'snaps'. Once a 'snap' is sent to someone else, it lasts on the screen of the receiver for a matter of seconds before disappearing. There is also a feature called 'Snapstory' where you can put your 'snaps' on your 'story' for more than one person to see for 24 hours. **To be eligible to sign up for Snapchat, you must be at least 13 years old.**
- **Instagram:** a photo and video sharing app. People on Instagram can connect with one another through comments, captions and hashtags on photos and videos. **Anyone 13 and older can create an Instagram account by registering an email address and selecting a username.**
- **WhatsApp:** a free mobile messaging app which allows users to send and receive messages, images and videos to their existing phone contacts, using an internet connection. WhatsApp users can create groups and send messages to lots of their friends at the same time. **To be eligible to sign up for this service, you must be at least 16 years of age.**
- Many gaming sites, such as Fortnite, also allow players to communicate with each other through voice or messaging. These sites may not require a lower age limit to be stated. All games have a PEGI rating, but this may only relate to game content and not accessibility to other gamers.

We understand that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the ways our children are using new and ever changing technology. They are immersed in a society that has become dependent on powerful computers, including smart phones, iPads, interactive online games and virtual communities. Websites such as those mentioned above, to name but a few, offer fantastic opportunities for communication and social connections, however they are created with their audience in mind.

When monitoring your son/daughter's internet use, please remind yourself of the concerns of social media:

- Many sites use 'targeted' advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other inappropriate nature, depending on the age they stated when they registered. They may have lied about their age to get an account, making them appear older than they are, increasing this risk.
- Young people may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour. The general rule is, if they aren't friends in real life, they shouldn't be 'friends' online.
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on social media is NOT moderated and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for young people.
- Photographs shared by users are NOT moderated and therefore young people could be exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own.
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options.
- Social media sites can be exploited by bullies and for inappropriate contact.
- Social media sites cannot and do not verify their members, therefore, it is important to remember that if your son/daughter can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else.

Primarily, occurrences and reported incidents of misuse of social media sites happen at home, after school hours when children have access to web sites that are blocked at school. With this in mind, and in response to concerned parents who have asked for advice regarding internet safety, we feel it important to point out to parents the risks of unregulated use of such sites, so you can make informed decisions as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not and when and how to monitor their use, particularly at night time. We strongly advise a device-free bedroom policy after bedtime to allow for uninterrupted sleep and rest.

Although we cannot govern matters occurring out of school hours, which is parental responsibility, 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 and any form of 'cyber-bullying'.

Should you decide to allow your child to have an online profile we strongly advise you:

- Check their profile is set to private and that only their friends can see information they post.

- Monitor your child's use and talk to them about safe and appropriate online behaviour such as not sharing personal information and not posting or messaging offensive/inappropriate messages or photos.
- Monitor your child's use of language and how they communicate to other people, ensuring profanity is discouraged.
- Have a look at advice for parents on the social media sites.
- Set up your own profiles so you understand how the site works and ask them to have you as their friend on their profile so you know what they are posting online.
- Make sure your son/daughter understand the following rules:
 - Always keep your profile private.
 - Never accept a friend you do not know in real life.
 - Never post anything which could reveal your identity including photographs wearing school uniform where possible.
 - Never post anything you wouldn't want your parents or teachers to see.
 - Never agree to meet somebody you only know online without telling a trusted adult.
 - Think before you post. (Children are not always aware of the impact messages and group texts could have on others who see them.)
 - Always tell someone if you feel threatened or someone upsets you.

Fortunately, there is a wealth of advice and information available for parents and carers on keeping children safe online. We recommend that all parents visit the CEOP Think U Know website for more information on keeping your child safe online at www.thinkuknow.co.uk.

At <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/> you will find guides on how to check app and device settings for both gaming and social media platforms.

At www.getsafeonline.org you will find links on what to do if you come across an issue related to internet use and you wish to report it.

Through e-safety lessons provided at school, assemblies, guest speakers, and PSHE lessons, we do our best to provide our children with the awareness and knowledge they need in order to recognise and avoid inappropriate, dangerous, destructive or unlawful behaviour and to respond appropriately. However, it is only through a collaborative effort between parents and teachers that we will succeed in creating responsible and safe cyber citizens and ultimately keep all our children safe.

As part of this working collaboration, please complete the attached form indicating both your receipt of this letter and your continued commitment to work in partnership with the school.

If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact either myself or your child's class teacher.

For further information on the way we use your data, please see the Xavier Catholic Education Trust Privacy Notice. This can be found on the Xavier Catholic Education Trust website in the About section under the list of Central Policies and Financial statements.

Thank you for your support with this matter.



Mrs H Murphy
Acting Head Teacher

.....
I have read and understand the advice provided by St Anne's School regarding children's use of social media.

Name of child/children..... Class

Signed.....

Date



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