

‘Achieving Excellence through Leadership’

GILES JUNIOR SCHOOL

Telephone: 01438 353374 email: admin@gilesjm.herts.sch.uk Website: www.gilesjm.herts.sch.uk



Headteacher: Miss. L. Whitby

Tuesday, 21 March 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to advise you of a few concerns we have regarding children's use of social media apps outside of school. We have noticed a rise in issues, which are predominantly happening as a result of group chats on WhatsApp. This is leading to a lot of upset within school and is impacting on the children being in the right frame of mind to learn.

The minimum age to use WhatsApp is 16 years old.

The information below has been taken from the NSPCC website and explains some of the dangers with using WhatsApp:

- **Unwanted contact** – To contact somebody on WhatsApp, all you need is their phone number. This means that your child could be at risk of receiving unwanted messages or calls from others.
- **Pressure to respond** – Features that allow other users to see when your child is online, if they have read a message or when they were last active on the app could make your child feel pressured to respond even when they do not want to.
- **Location sharing** – The live location feature means that your child could reveal their current location to others. This feature can be used in groups as well as individual chats so your child could reveal this information to people they don't know if they are in the same group.
- **Inappropriate content** – WhatsApp messages are end-to-end encrypted which means that content is not monitored. This means your child could see or hear harmful or upsetting content.
- **Cyberbullying** – WhatsApp groups can be controlled by 'admin', who can change settings, such as the name of the group, who is allowed to send messages, as well as inviting and removing people from the chat. This can lead to children feeling left out or being deliberately excluded or removed from groups.
- **Oversharing** – Privacy features, such as disappearing or 'view once' messages, might mean your child feels safe to reveal private information or images. However, there is always a risk that an unintended person might see what they have sent.

Please visit: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/2023-01-12-is-whatsapp-safe-for-my-child/> for more information.

We appreciate that it is a parental decision to allow your child to have a phone and whether or not you allow them to use WhatsApp, despite the age restriction. If you do allow your child to do this, we ask for your vigilance, as their interactions require supervision and support.

There are two documents attached with this letter. One has information about age restrictions for social media apps. The other is our "Golden Rules of Happy Messaging" which we would be grateful if you could speak to your child about. We address these rules proactively with all children as part of our e-safety lessons, as well as when issues arise.

Thank you for your cooperation.

