

Churchside Federation

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Monday 11th July 2022

'WhatsApp'

Dear Parents / Carers,

Over the last two weeks we have had many parental complaints about group chats on the Social Media platform 'WhatsApp' from both Mundford and Gooderstone Year 6 Parents. This App is being used to communicate with one another both individually and as part of group chats. We are aware that many children within Year 6 are using this app and others to chat at inappropriate times of the evening, often late into the night and are exchanging inappropriate language, threatening messages and worrying content with one another.

I think it very important to notes that 'WhatsApp' terms of service state:

- *If you live in a country in the European Economic Area (which includes the European Union), and any other included country or territory (collectively referred to as the European Region), you must be at least **16** years old (or such greater age required in your country) to register for and use WhatsApp.*
- *If you live in any other country except those in the European Region, you must be at least **13** years old (or such greater age required in your country) to register for and use WhatsApp.*
 - ♣ *Please refer to our Terms of Service for more information.*
 - ♣ *Creating an account with false information is a violation of our Terms.*
 - ♣ *Registering an account on behalf of someone who is underage is also a violation of our Terms.*

It is important to draw to your attention that the children in our school should not be using WhatsApp, as, due to their age, it is a violation of WhatsApp's terms and conditions. It is clear that children in both schools are struggling to regulate themselves on group chats and are unable to use them to promote healthy relationships. Even after conversations between school, pupil and home these behaviours still continue.

As a school we can and will continue to address the concerns that you have raised with the pupils and parents involved. We will continue to educate children about use of social media and online bullying but we need you to do the same. Parental responsibility is key here and usage needs to be policed by parents as we have no access to devices in school and can't remove/block or stop chats being created. If you have enabled your child to use such social media platforms, recommended advice is that parents should monitor regularly the way children are using this to communicate with one another e.g: are you aware of who your child is talking to and the nature of the conversations they are having? Children who are under the age limit for these apps should not be using them unaccompanied and a trusted adult should carefully monitor the content of 'chat' to ensure that children are not using inappropriate language with one another and that the nature of the conversation is appropriate.

We do not need to tell you, I am sure, that our digital footprint is with us for life and that what is posted online, even within private messages, can have a detrimental impact. As I am sure will agree, keeping our children safe both physically and online is of the up most importance and we must work together to ensure our children are using any online platforms appropriately and safely.

We have spoken to the children on numerous times about the concerns we have around the use of social media platforms in Year 6 and the importance of reporting any worries, concerns and difficulties they have. I feel that the worries that were brought to my attention were legitimate and, in my professional opinion, the children do not need to have additional anxiety caused due to a messaging service when they are about to transition to High School. We have informed the High School about the social media issues this cohort of children are facing to ensure that they are aware.

We appreciate your support and cooperation in this and we would recommend that all families have an open and frank discussion about the use of social media platforms the children may be using and reconsider whether they are appropriate at this stage.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Godbold