

5th November 2019

Dear Families,

Supervision of your child's use of the internet and social media

As always, the success of your child relies on the successful partnership between us as a school and you as families.

In the spirit of this partnership, I am writing to you to urge you in the strongest terms **to supervise your child's use of their devices and social media**. It is, in fact, illegal for someone under the age of 16 to have a Whatsapp account, you can read more here: <https://parentinfo.org/article/whatsapp-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers>

Their unsupervised access to the internet is problematic for several reasons:

1. One of our core school values is Be Kind. We need your partnership to instil this value. **It is very clear that some of our pupils are using social media to be extremely unkind to one another, about other pupils and about staff.** This is completely unacceptable. You have the reasonable expectation that we, as a school, deal with unkind behaviour that occurs during the school day. Equally, the same responsibility lies with families for unkind interactions that take place outside of school.
2. Unkind conversations on Whatsapp inevitably lead to **confrontation in school** when pupils are reunited again. This disrupts their learning and that of their peers.
3. **The internet is a hugely risky place.** The content of some of the Whatsapp conversations is frankly shocking. It can be nasty and sometimes sexual in its content. It raises significant safeguarding questions - what are your children accessing? What are they seeing or learning about? Who are they talking to?

Our side of this partnership is that we undertake to:

1. Provide a curriculum which includes E-safety, PSHE and Sex and Relationships Education
2. Update families about E-safety developments and provide support (such as our Parent Meet last year) about how to set up restrictions and supervision
3. Provide 1:1 teaching opportunities when inappropriate social media use is brought to our attention
4. Inform parents of the worrying content of social media use when it is brought to our attention
5. Inform the relevant authorities of safeguarding concerns when appropriate

6. Continue to have a no mobiles policy in school so that they are protected from peer on peer abuse during school hours.

Your side of this partnership is that you undertake to:

1. Be vigilant and supervise your children's use of the internet and social media on all their devices
2. Teach your child about appropriate use of the internet and social media
3. Inform us of worrying content involving other children so that we can take the steps above.

I urge all families to act on the above, regardless of whether your child is in Primary or Secondary. Indeed, setting up the systems and expectations around access to devices when your children are young will be hugely beneficial as they progress to adolescence.

All children and teens are vulnerable on the internet, but our pupils - with their difficulties in social interaction and communication - are even more vulnerable. Whilst they won't appreciate your vigilance and supervision, it is the right thing to do.

If we can help further, such as producing social stories to explain why you are supervising or applying these boundaries, then please just get in touch with the class teacher.

Thank you for your support.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Helen Ralston'.

Helen Ralston

Head of The Rise School