**BROOKSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Rostherne Avenue, Great Sutton, Cheshire, CH66 2EE

0151 558 1123 www.brookside.cheshire.sch.uk Headteacher – Mr D Orme BA (Hons) NPQH Deputy Head – Ms J Smith B Ed (Hons) NPQSL

*“Happy and Successful in Everything we Do!”*

Dear Parents and Carers,

In today's digital age, social media platforms have become an integral part of our lives, especially for our children and teenagers. While these platforms offer opportunities for connection and self-expression, it is crucial to be aware of age restrictions and their potential impact on mental health.

We want to inform you about the age restrictions imposed by various social media apps to ensure the well-being of our young users:

**Facebook**: The minimum age requirement for Facebook is 13 years old. Younger children may be drawn to this platform due to its widespread use, but it is essential to respect this age restriction. Facebook can expose young users to content and interactions that may not be suitable for their age group, potentially impacting their mental health.

**Snapchat**: Snapchat also requires users to be at least 13 years old to create an account. While Snapchat is known for its temporary nature and disappearing messages, it can still have a significant impact on a young person's mental health, as it often emphasises image-centric communication and comparisons.

**TikTok**: TikTok, a popular platform for short-form videos, has a minimum age requirement of 13 years old. Young users can be influenced by trends and challenges on TikTok, which may not always promote a healthy self-image or positive mental well-being.

**WhatsApp:** WhatsApp sets the minimum age at 16 years old. While WhatsApp primarily focuses on messaging, it is essential to consider the potential for group chats, sharing of multimedia content, and exposure to sensitive information that could affect the mental health of younger users.

**Negative Effects on Mental Health**:

Exposure to age-inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and excessive screen time are some of the concerns associated with underage social media usage. Young minds are susceptible to these negative influences, which can lead to:

**Anxiety and Stress**: Constant exposure to unrealistic standards or cyberbullying can trigger anxiety and stress among young users.

**Depression**: Social media platforms can create feelings of isolation or inadequacy, leading to depression in some cases.

**Sleep Disturbances**: Excessive screen time, especially before bedtime, can disrupt sleep patterns, affecting overall well-being.

**Low Self-esteem**: Comparing oneself to others on social media can negatively impact self-esteem and self-worth.

At Brookside we prioritise online safety and mental health education. We are pleased to inform you that each year group delivers lessons every half term about online safety. These lessons are designed to empower students with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the digital world responsibly and safely.

We strongly encourage you to have open conversations with your children about responsible and age-appropriate social media usage. Help them understand the importance of adhering to age restrictions and maintaining a healthy balance between their online and offline lives.

Additionally, please stay informed about the apps and platforms your children are using and consider setting appropriate parental controls and monitoring their online activities to ensure their safety and well-being.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We believe that by working together, we can create a safer online environment for our children and promote their mental and emotional health.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

NSPCC - Social media

Find out how to help children stay safe on social media.

