Guidance on Social Media Use for Primary-Age Children

Please keep in mind that most social networking sites, including those listed below, are designed for older teens and adults. These platforms have strict registration policies outlined in their privacy terms and provide mechanisms to report underage users. Here are a few examples:

- **WhatsApp**: Users must be at least 13 years old by legal requirement, but the recommended age for use is 16.

- **Facebook**: Users must be at least 13 years old to create an account. Creating an account with false information, such as on behalf of a child under 13, is a violation of Facebook's terms.

- **YouTube**: Account holders must be 18, but a 13-year-old can join with parental permission.

- **Instagram**: Not intended for children under 13.

Despite these established age restrictions, we know that many younger children at our school are already active on social media, often *with* the knowledge and approval of their parents.

While children are increasingly adept with technology, this doesn't mean their emotional and cognitive skills develop at the same pace. Studies show that it takes around 12 years for children to develop the cognitive ability for ethical thinking, making it challenging for them to fully understand the effects of their online actions on others. Unfortunately, young children on social media can unintentionally put themselves at risk, becoming vulnerable to online harassment and cyberbullying before they're prepared to handle it.

To clarify, our school is not "against" social media. We recognise its potential for positive communication and self-expression, and we acknowledge that most users interact safely and responsibly online. However, like many schools, we have increasing concerns about the risks involved, including:

- **Unsafe sharing of personal information**: Children may disclose sensitive details without understanding that what's shared on social media is public, potentially permanent, and accessible to a far larger audience than they intend.

- **Addiction**: Excessive time spent online can negatively impact a child's education, well-being, and health.

- **Cyberbullying**: The posting or sending of harmful, sometimes malicious content that can deeply affect young users.

- **Risky interactions**: Exposure to inappropriate content, images, or predatory influences.

There is no single solution to these issues. Still, we believe a thorough, ongoing approach to online safety and responsible use is essential for everyone involved in a child's well-being. We encourage you to continue monitoring your child's devices, and for additional guidance on social media, please see the resources below:

- [Vodafone Digital Parenting](#)

- [O2 Online Safety](#)

- [NSPCC Online Safety](#)

- [Is WhatsApp Safe for My Child? – NSPCC Blog](#)