



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

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Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it

Proverbs 22:6

Online safety at home

Dear Parents and Carers

As we come to the end of a unique term at St Joseph's, we are conscious of our children spending extended periods of time at home in the evenings, at weekends and during the holidays. We are continually striving to promote the message of online safety and healthy use of technology at home as this is an increasingly important issue. Our computing curriculum includes regular e-safety lessons intended to educate our children on safe technology use. We would like to share some information with you regarding online safety, which we feel may be relevant to many of our families at the moment.

YouTube

The minimum age for a YouTube account is 13

YouTube is a website or app which we are seeing more and more children using at home. The resource it offers in terms of educational material is invaluable. YouTube can also be used for entertainment and can be used to browse videos on almost any topic. Unfortunately, many videos on YouTube are inappropriate for children and in some cases can have a negative impact on the wellbeing and safety of our children. This can cause issues within school if a child then copies or repeats things they have seen in a video. According to a study, there is a 45 per cent probability of a child reaching inappropriate content within 10 clicks of a first, child-oriented YouTube video. To protect your child if they are using YouTube, we would suggest the following measures:

Use YouTube Kids

YouTube Kids can be accessed at <https://www.youtubekids.com/> or via an app available on Google Play for android devices and the App store for apple devices. It allows you as a parent to set content filters which are far more stringent than those available on YouTube itself.

Enable YouTube content control

(Enabling content controls will **not** filter out all inappropriate content – it will only filter out content which is intended for those aged over 18 only - leaving videos which are still not suitable or safe for a primary school audience)

Monitor your child's YouTube activity

The most valuable thing we can do as parents is ensure we are always aware of what our children are accessing online. If your child is only using YouTube whilst you are in the room monitoring what they are accessing then you are safeguarding them against viewing harmful material.

Consider using google family link, which allows you to create a safe account for your child to use YouTube whilst providing you with data on their usage, allowing you to know exactly what they are doing on their account. <https://families.google.com/familylink/>





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Posting Content or comments on YouTube

We are aware that an increasing number of children are actively posting content on a YouTube 'channel'. Technically this is not possible unless they have either said they are over 13 or are using a parent's account. Whilst this is often a fantastic creative outlet, it is important to be aware that they are posting videos which can be accessed by anyone, anywhere. This may mean that they can be contacted by anyone with a YouTube account which clearly presents a significant safety issue. Whilst we would advise against your child posting content on YouTube, if this is something your child is doing we would encourage you to consider the following:

Set clear boundaries for your child as to what they share on YouTube – giving away personal information can put your child in danger.

Monitor all content and communication they are making on YouTube. Your child can be contacted by anyone who comments on a video they have posted. Comments can be disabled or if they are not it is important that you monitor them continually. Consider how you would feel about a stranger starting a conversation with your child in the street!

WhatsApp

The minimum age to use WhatsApp in the UK is 16

Many of our older children communicate with their friends and family using WhatsApp or any other instant messaging application. Whilst it is important that they can use this safely, it is also important to be aware that children are often not emotionally mature enough to deal with this technology. Being connected to friends or groups of friends at all times of the day without actually having any face-to-face contact can lead to issues which are then brought in to school and cause significant disruption and in some cases distress. Children may at some point send or receive messages which are inappropriate or offensive and these messages of course cannot be unsent. If they have received something inappropriate then they are faced with the difficult decision to report it. It is hugely important that as a parent you are aware of how your child is using WhatsApp and monitor their WhatsApp use closely. **If you do not feel your child is mature enough to make sensible choices when using an app like WhatsApp, then it may be in their best interests that they do not have access to it.**

Other online apps and games

There are a huge number of other online apps and games that children may be using at home. <http://www.internetmatters.org/> is an excellent online resource for teachers and parents if you have any concerns over a specific app your child might be using.

If you have any concerns related to your child's online activity please contact either your child's class teacher or Mr Bowring (e-safety lead) using the email addresses provided on the relevant class page.

Above all else, it is important that we as parents and teachers engage with our children about their online activity in a positive way – a discussion about what is or isn't appropriate will go a long way towards ensuring that your child makes a positive choice when faced with a difficult situation online.

Thank you for your continued support.

W Bowring

Mr W Bowring
Computing Lead/Safeguarding Officer for online safety

