



## Kingsnorth Church of England Primary School

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Headteacher: Mr Iain Witts

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### Online Safety and Social Media

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Online safety is an important part of keeping children safe at Kingsnorth Primary School. All of our pupils are taught how to stay safe and behave appropriately online, but this approach is only successful if we work together and reinforce safe behaviour at home too.

Recently we have been made aware of a variety of incidents which have caused upset and concern relating to children's activity on Social Media. As they get older and have increased online and Social Media access, we feel that this is an appropriate time to highlight some simple online safety tips to help parents/carers make safer choices and support their children online.

Social Media access is becoming an increasing concern in school, particularly WhatsApp and other chat platforms. It is worth remembering that WhatsApp has an age restriction of 16+ in the UK and Europe, exactly for the reasons we are seeing affecting our children. Any child in Year 6 on WhatsApp is breaking the Terms and Conditions of the App.

We strongly encourage you to read the information below/attached, talk to your children about the potential risks and monitor the way that it is used.

#### **Talk to your children:**

Take an active interest in your child's online life and engage in the digital world with them.

- Let your children teach you about their online world and how they use technology; playing new games and exploring websites together can often open opportunities to discuss safe behaviour online.
- Make sure your children know that you are safe and approachable; remind them that they can tell you if something happens online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable, without being told off or punished.

You can find more advice about talking to you child about online safety from CEOP:

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/having-a-conversation-with-your-child/](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/having-a-conversation-with-your-child/)

#### **Setting boundaries:**

Much like the 'real world', parents need to set boundaries for children online; this provides them with a clear understanding of the limits, expectations and consequences of their behaviour.

- Agree as a family, how the internet and technology will be used in your home; encourage children to use the online safety messages they learn in school and adapt these into your own family rules.
- Discuss online boundaries too; if your child loves to socialise online, talk to them about what is and isn't appropriate to share with their friends online.
- Remember to role-model positive behaviour online; consider asking your child's permission before posting photos of them on social media this Christmas and empower them to have control over their 'digital reputation'.

Take a look at the family agreement template available from Childnet International for some ideas: [www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/have-a-conversation](http://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/have-a-conversation)

### **Make informed choices:**

It is vital that we fully understand the capabilities and make informed decisions about new games, apps and devices, before giving them to children as a gift.

- Do your research; ask the shop about pre-installed apps or tools and check whether the device or game has an online component, which allows them to connect with others online.
- Always check the PEGI age rating and descriptors on games/apps before signing up and carefully consider whether the content is appropriate for your child.
- Familiarise yourself with the privacy, safety and security tools on new devices; ensure you are in a position to teach your child how to make their accounts private and how to block and report other people online.

Use the parent guides and shopper's checklists from UK Safer Internet Centre to help you ask the right questions and make informed choices:

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parents-guide-technology](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parents-guide-technology)

### **Filters and Parental Controls:**

Children can accidentally or deliberately be exposed to illegal, unwanted or unpleasant content online, but there are some simple steps you can take at home to help minimise this risk.

- Make sure you install anti-virus software, filters and parental controls on your child's device before giving it to them.
- Ensure that you are role-modelling good behaviour by using strong passwords yourself; make them difficult to guess and don't share them with your children.
- Remember that blocks and filters are not 100% effective and you can't rely on them alone to protect your children, so remind them to tell you if they see something upsetting online.

Take a look at the interactive guide to parental controls available from Internet Matters:  
[www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/interactive-guide/](http://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/interactive-guide/)

**Other useful websites for parents/carers:**

- [www.net-aware.org.uk](http://www.net-aware.org.uk)- NSPCC guide to the most popular apps and websites available online.
- [www.nspcc.org.uk/shareaware](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/shareaware)- NSPCC advice for parents to teach children about online sharing.
- [www.parentport.org.uk](http://www.parentport.org.uk)- Report inappropriate content online.
- [www.getsafeonline.org](http://www.getsafeonline.org)- Free up-to-date security and technical advice.

Yours sincerely,

Mr I Witts  
Executive Headteacher





# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about WHATSAPP



WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service, with around two billion users exchanging texts, photos, videos and documents, as well as making voice and video calls. Its end-to-end encryption means messages can only be viewed by the sender and any recipients: not even WhatsApp can read them. Updates to its privacy policy in 2021 (involving sharing data with parent company Facebook) caused millions to leave the app, but the new policy was widely misinterpreted – it only related to WhatsApp's business features, not to personal messages.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### SCAMS

Fraudsters occasionally send WhatsApp messages pretending to offer prizes – encouraging the user to click on a link to win. Other common scams involve warning someone that their WhatsApp subscription has run out (aiming to dupe them into disclosing payment details) or impersonating a friend or relative and asking for money to be transferred to help with an emergency.

### DISAPPEARING MESSAGES

Users can set WhatsApp messages to disappear in 24 hours, 7 days or 90 days by default. Photos and videos can also be instructed to disappear after the recipient has viewed them. These files can't be saved or forwarded – so if your child was sent an inappropriate message, it would be difficult to prove any wrongdoing. However, the receiver can take a screenshot and save that as evidence.

### ENABLING FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp has unfortunately been linked to accelerating the spread of dangerous rumours. In India in 2018, some outbreaks of mob violence appear to have been sparked by false allegations being shared on the app. WhatsApp itself took steps to prevent its users circulating hazardous theories and speculation in the early weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### POTENTIAL CYBERBULLYING

Group chat and video calls are great for connecting with multiple people in WhatsApp, but there is always the potential for someone's feelings to be hurt by an unkind comment or joke. The 'only admins' feature gives the admin(s) of a group control over who can send messages. They can, for example, block people from posting in a chat, which could make a child feel excluded and upset.

### CONTACT FROM STRANGERS

To start a WhatsApp chat, you only need the mobile number of the person you want to message (the other person also needs to have the app). WhatsApp can access the address book on someone's device and recognise which of their contacts also use the app. So if your child has ever given their phone number to someone they don't know, that person could use it to contact them via WhatsApp.

### LOCATION SHARING

The 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, allowing friends to see their movements. WhatsApp describes it as a "simple and secure way to let people know where you are." It is a useful method for a young person to let loved ones know they're safe – but if they used it in a chat with people they don't know, they would be exposing their location to them, too.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

CLICK HERE

### CREATE A SAFE PROFILE

Even though someone would need a child's phone number to add them as a contact, it's also worth altering a young person's profile settings to restrict who can see their photo and status. The options are 'everyone', 'my contacts' and 'nobody' – choosing one of the latter two ensures that your child's profile is better protected.



### EXPLAIN ABOUT BLOCKING

If your child receives spam or offensive messages, calls or files from a contact, they should block them using 'settings' in the chat. Communication from a blocked contact won't show up on their device and stays undelivered. Blocking someone does not remove them from your child's contact list – so they also need to be deleted from the address book.



### REPORT POTENTIAL SCAMS

Young people shouldn't engage with any message that looks suspicious or too good to be true. When your child receives a message from an unknown number for the first time, they'll be given the option to report it as spam. If the sender claims to be a friend or relative, call that person on their usual number to verify it really is them, or if it's someone trying to trick your child.



### LEAVE A GROUP

If your child is in a group chat that is making them feel uncomfortable, or has been added to a group that they don't want to be part of, they can use WhatsApp's group settings to leave. If someone exits a group, the admin can add them back in once; if they leave a second time, it is permanent.



### THINK ABOUT LOCATION

If your child needs to use the 'live location' function to show you or one of their friends where they are, advise them to share their location only for as long as they need to. WhatsApp gives a range of 'live location' options, and your child should manually stop sharing their position as soon as it is no longer needed.



### DELETE ACCIDENTAL MESSAGES

If your child posts a message they want to delete, WhatsApp allows the user seven minutes to erase a message. Tap and hold on the message, choose 'delete' and then 'delete for everyone.' However, it's important to remember that recipients may have seen (and taken a screenshot of) a message before it was deleted.



### CHECK THE FACTS

You can now fact-check WhatsApp messages that have been forwarded at least five times, by double-tapping the magnifying glass icon to the right of the message. From there, your child can launch a Google search and decide for themselves whether the message was true or not.



## Meet Our Expert

Parveen Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Click: a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.



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