



New Town Primary School

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Dear Parents,

We are becoming increasingly aware and worried about the access that many of our children have to on-line social media, games and YouTube. There have been an increasing number of incidents where children have been upset by thoughtless, unkind or inappropriate posts on social media sites. These posts are then shared with other members of the class causing hurt, anxiety and embarrassment. Unfortunately, this on-line access and behaviour is not limited to a small minority but rather to the vast majority of our older children. An increasing amount of incidents are needing to be sorted out during school and learning time because of ongoing repercussions in school from this type of access.

When questioned: most children owned a mobile phone; many had other gaming devices or tablets; many used social media sites such as TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram, the majority played games on their devices and many said they had free access to YouTube.

Should we be concerned? Just reading though some of the information below, the answer is certainly yes.

When you sign up for TikTok, your account is public by default, meaning anyone can see your videos, send you direct messages, and use your location information. TikTok is intended for people who are at least 13 years old.

Snapchat is also intended for people who are at least 13 years old. However, when setting up an account there is no birth date verification so children could set up an account using false information. Snapchat is almost impossible to monitor by parents as images are sent and then quickly deleted. This tempts children into sending daring, harmful or inappropriate pictures, videos and messages thinking that they cannot be saved or shared. Many people and particularly children believe this makes it safe however, screen shots can be taken and saved and if you are a frequent user Snapchat images can be intercepted by a third party.

Instagram is widely used and is owned by Facebook so has similar safety and privacy settings. It is intended for people who are at least 13 years old. However, there is no age verification process and users will have access to mature content, strangers, marketing ploys and data collection.

On-line gaming seems to be, for many children, an integral part of their lives. The game that seems to be played by many of our children is Fortnite: exciting, gripping and all-consuming. Whilst playing the game, players can hear obscene language including swearing, blasphemy and racist comments. The game can be played by hundreds of players at any one time and the range of people a child could encounter will be wide and often dangerous. Fortnite is suitable for children who are at least 12 years old.

Other games played by many of our children are:

Minecraft – suitable for 11+

Roblox - suitable for 14+

Grand Theft Auto- suitable for 13+



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The influences of on-line access are wide-ranging from dangerous to thrilling to informative. It is used in business, to communicate with friends and is an incredible source of information if used carefully. But it can also be destructive and dangerous. As parents and teachers we have a duty to monitor and be aware of what the children in our care are accessing; there is no doubt that the internet has a huge influence on all our lives and we must protect children from harm: from cyber-bullying, invasion of privacy, obscene and offensive images and from on-line grooming. This is not an issue that is confined to the news or police reports: this is on our doorsteps and in every locality in the UK, and is something which all parents have a duty to protect their children from.

At home, as parents, it is your duty to:

- agree boundaries for use and explore sites together,
- install all parental controls where possible,
- time limit device access,
- only allow access in a communal place in the house (not in bedrooms),
- talk to older siblings to ensure they don't share access with younger members of the family and
- ensure websites, accounts or social media which require your child to be 13 (or older) are not used by them.

At school we will promise to educate your child about on-line safety and to notify you if we hear of children using social media inappropriately. Whilst we hope parents will make the right decisions in the interests of their children, if we have information that children have an account where they are aged below the specified age limit, the school may take action and report these instances to the social media provider ourselves.

It is evident that many of our children are being allowed access to a vast array of inappropriate material; this is influencing their actions, their language and their behaviour. Please take responsibility and take action to ensure that your child is safe and their exposure to the internet is appropriate. Aside from the immediate safety concerns, this will help them to focus and learn at school which is vitally important during their final years of primary school.

Yours sincerely,

Miss P. Cornish

Headteacher