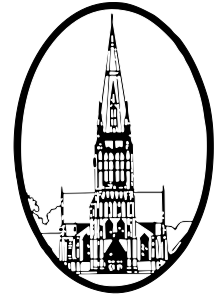


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Headteacher: Jane O'Brien



*"St Mary's... feeding the mind, body and spirit
so we can be the best we can be."*

10th May 2023

Dear Parents,

A incident has come to our attention that has taken place on WhatsApp. During our investigation of this incident we have noted that many of the children in Year 5 are using this and other applications to communicate before/after school and at the weekends, and that the content is not always appropriate or desirable.

As you are aware, access to and use of social media is common and has become second nature to many of us. With this in mind, we wanted to remind you of the following:

Age limit

The **minimum age for using WhatsApp is 16 years old**. Most other applications such as **Instagram and Facebook have a minimum age of 13** and some like **YouTube have an age limit of 18 years old**. This means that no children at St Mary's should be accessing these and if they are, parents need to understand that they are responsible for their children's actions on these sites.

Cyberbullying

WhatsApp is often reported in the media as the means for unkindness and bullying. Please monitor your child's communication with others and talk to them about what to do if they see something that concerns them and what is appropriate to share. As with all social media, caution is advised over your child's digital footprint, particularly the content (photos, videos and messages) they choose to share via WhatsApp. Once shared, it can be copied, re shared and posted anywhere online and is there forever.

Group chats

WhatsApp also contains a group chat function. The group administrator is the only user who can add or remove participants and make changes. If someone unknown is added to the group it's possible that your child could see or be contacted by someone they don't know and could be vulnerable to content posted by this person.



Social media has opened up a whole new world of communication of which is exciting and invaluable, however we must ensure that our children are equipped with the knowledge and understanding that they need to do this appropriately and safely.

It is often challenging for us as adults to fully understand the fast changing technology and the challenges and concerns that are associated with them, therefore I would ask you all to take some time to look at the information below.

I would also ask that if you become aware of any concerning content, that you make school aware of this. Fortunately, we have been able to deal with this incident swiftly because of children and parents that did exactly that.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

Jane O'Brien
Headteacher

[social media \(thinkuknow.co.uk\)](http://social.media(thinkuknow.co.uk))

Age Restrictions for Social Media Platforms

What is the minimum age for account holders on these social media sites and apps?

Age Restriction	Platforms
Under 13	Roblox, PopJam, FaceTime
13+	Twitter, Facebook and Messenger, Viber, WeChat, Monkey, Yubo, Dubsplash, Instagram, TikTok, Skype, Google Hangouts, Reddit, Snapchat, Pinterest
16+	WhatsApp, Telegram Messenger, Tumblr
17+	Line, Sarahah, Tellonym
18+ or 13 with parent's permission	YouTube, WeChat, Kik, Flickr, Play Store, Spotify (13 with parental permission)

Sourced from NSPCC website October 2019



