



Dear Parent or Guardian

Nowadays many children have social media profiles, even though the permitted minimum age to use these sites is often 13 and in the case of WhatsApp 16, according to the sites terms and conditions.

Keswick School is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the Internet and as such we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern. Social media sites offer amazing communication and social connections, however they are created with their audience in mind and this is specifically over 13 years old. Possible risks for children under 13 using the site may include:

- Social media sites use “age targeted” advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other inappropriate nature, depending on the age they stated they were when they registered, this age stays with them as they continue with the site
- Children may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on social media is not moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children
- Photographs shared by users are not moderated and therefore children could be exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options
- Social media could be exploited by bullies and for other inappropriate contact
- Most social media sites cannot and do not verify its members therefore it is important to remember that if your child can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else!

We feel it important to point out to parents the risks of underage use of such sites, so you can make an informed decision as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not. These profiles will have been created away from school and sometimes by a child, their friends, siblings or even parents. We will take action if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our children. However we can only deal with incidents that we are aware of and have a direct bearing in school i.e. problems come into school following use of these sites. If there are persistent problems with issues such as cyber-bullying we would strongly recommend you to contact the police regarding this.

Should you decide to allow your child to have any social media profile we strongly advise you to:

- Check their profile is set to private and that only friends can see information that is posted
- Monitor your child's use and talk to them about safe and appropriate online behaviour such as not sharing personal information and not posting offensive messages or photos

- Ask them to install the CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) application on their profile. This places a bookmark on their profile to CEOP and the Report Abuse button which has been known to deter offenders
- Have a look at the advice for parents/carers from social media sites
- Set up your own profile so you understand how the site works and ask them to have you as a friend on their profile so you know what they are posting online
- Make sure your child understands the following rules:
  - Always keep your profile private
  - Never accept friends you don't know in real life
  - Never post anything which could reveal your identity
  - Never post anything you wouldn't want your parents to see
  - Never agree to meet somebody you only know online without telling a trusted adult
  - Always tell someone if you feel threatened or someone upsets you

We'd recommend that all parents visit the CEOP Think U Know website for more information on keeping your child safe online [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Ms Wendy Lightfoot or Mrs Clare Hiddleston, the Education Support Officer.

Yours sincerely

Simon Jackson  
Head Teacher



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