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Dear Parent/Carer,

Date: 28ᵗʰ January 2020

Re: Under 13s and Social Media

https://parentzone.org.uk/article/under-13s-and-social-media

At Heron Hall Academy, we are committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet. This topic is regularly discussed in tutor time, assemblies and lessons. It is also important that parents have this conversation with students at home. **Snapchat** is one example, of the many types of social media that is now in use and it is important to know how it should be used.

Most of these social network, picture and video sharing applications such as snapchat *have an age restriction of 13* and therefore none of our pupils should be using these apps if they are below this age.

We are aware, however, that some children are using some of the above social media apps and therefore must have given a false age in order to create an account.

As with any social media account, it is vitally important that they are set up carefully and with the necessary security settings. Children are often creating 'group chats' and others are joining these. This means that all information is shared with anyone who is in the group so privacy is lost and in some cases, strangers have been added to the group.

We understand that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the ways that our children are using new and ever changing technologies. Our children are immersed in a society that has become dependent on powerful computers, including smart phones, iPads, interactive online games and virtual communities. Websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Skype, Whats App, Viber, musical.ly and OoVoo. These sites are created with their audience in mind, the age of which **is over 13**.

More information and guidance about E-safety can be found at the link above and on the school website in the parent>E-safety section; this section has links to online advice and guidance pages as does the link at the top of the page. Two documents to assist are also attached.

Thank you for your support with this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Arthur Barzey
Headteacher

Snapchat is a photo sharing app for mobile phones and tablets. The app allows users to share images, videos and chat with friends. Users can share images and videos directly to specific friends, or through a 'story' shared with their entire friend list, which documents the previous 24 hours. In a study, Snapchat was ranked the 4th most negative app in terms of having an impact on young people's health and wellbeing, with children feeling that they can use the app Snapchat to "make you look pretty."

What parents need to know about
SNAPCHAT

EXPOSING YOUR CHILD'S EXACT LOCATION

The 'Snap Map' lets you share your EXACT location in real-time through a map on the app. The user's location updates when the app has been opened on the device. There is a warning on the Snapchat website about uploading images and videos to 'Our Story' stating that "snaps you submit to 'Our Story' can still show up on the Map, no matter which location setting you choose." When uploading to 'Our Story,' your child's image or video could appear in "Search results and Stories on or off Snapchat - today or in the future."

LENS EXPLORER

The 'Lens Studio' on Snapchat gives users the freedom to use their imagination to design their own filters for themselves and others to use. Snapchat states that the lenses users create "must comply with our Lens Studio Submission Guidelines and Community Guidelines and must be appropriate for Snapchatters ages 13+." The 'Lens Explorer' in the app now enables users to choose from thousands of these creations to alter their snaps. Anyone can create a lens for Snapchat, which gives opportunities for age-inappropriate content to be uploaded.

SCREENSHOTS & SAVED MESSAGES

While Snapchat's gimmick is that all photos, videos and text disappear eventually, users still have the capability to screenshot or record anything which has been sent to them. Users may sometimes forget that screenshotting is possible and send a compromising image or message to somebody who they think they trust. They may also accidentally send an image or message to somebody who they do not trust. Simply by pressing and holding a message, the user is able to save a message they have received, which can be screenshotted or used against them at a later date.

SNAPSTREAKS & ADDICTION

'Snap Streaks' are gained when snaps have been sent back and forth consecutively between friends. The longer that snaps are sent between users, the longer the streak becomes. Furthermore, Snapchat rewards users who have achieved high Snap Streaks, by gifting emojis, adding incentives for users to keep the streaks. Children invest time into making their streaks as long as possible, which can put an incredible amount of pressure on both themselves and their friendships.

SEXTING

Due to 'Snaps' disappearing, (users can even send a one-second photo or video), Snapchat has become the chosen platform for children and young people to send sexually explicit images or 'selfies.' Once a photo/video has been screenshotted, or recorded using another device or software, this can lead to further dangers, such as blackmail and cyberbullying. It is illegal to make, possess, download, store and share sexual images, photos and videos of a person under the age of 18. This also includes any sexual images, photos and videos that a child may have taken of themselves. However, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed, but taking formal action isn't in the public interest.

SNAP ORIGINALS

Through 'Snap Originals', users can watch content which has been created by Snapchat on the app, including comedy shows, drama, news and more. Additionally, there are new lenses and filters available, inspired by the 'snap originals' shows. This is another feature to encourage addiction.

Top Tips for Parents

THE RISKS OF SEXTING

It can be slightly awkward talking about this topic with your child, but if it helps them protect themselves, it is worth it. Talk to them about the consequences of sexting and make sure that they're aware of the risks. Ensure your child knows that 'Snaps' can be screenshotted. Teach them that if they post anything potentially embarrassing or harmful (either of themselves or someone else) it can have severe consequences as the message, image or video can be shared further.

REPORTING A STORY, LENS, FILTER, SNAP OR MESSAGE

If your child comes across inappropriate Snapchat content sent directly to them or in another person's story, advise them to report it immediately. This may include an inappropriate lens, filter, message or snap. To report an offensive lens, they should open the app and select the lens they want to report. An info button will appear above the lens. Click this, followed by the flag icon. This will send a report to Snapchat for further investigation. Reports can also be made on the Snapchat support website: support.snapchat.com.

USE 'GHOST MODE'

We highly recommend enabling 'Ghost Mode' on the app so that your child's location will no longer be visible to anyone on the 'Snap Map.' To enable this, go onto the Snap Map and tap the cog in the top-right corner. Here, change the setting to 'Ghost Mode.'

HOW TO DELETE A MESSAGE

Advise your child never to send any negative messages (or images through gallery in the chat on the app) as screenshots can still be taken. You should also advise your child to screenshot any negative comments they receive as the sender can also delete them. To delete a message, simply press and hold the sent message and press delete.

TURN OFF 'QUICK ADD'

'Quick Add' helps friends find each other on the app. This is based on mutual friends or if their number is in their phone book. Explain to your child that this feature can open up their profile to strangers. We highly recommend that your child turns off the 'Quick Add' feature. This can be done in the settings.

RESTRICT STORY VIEWS

Your child can add videos and images to their 'Story' throughout the day which will last for 24 hours. By default, anyone in a user's friends list can see their story. We recommend checking the privacy settings to ensure that this has not been edited. This can simply be done in the apps settings under the 'Who Can View My Story' section. The options to choose from are 'My Friends,' 'Everyone' or 'Custom' - we suggest that it is set to 'My Friends.'

Status of Mind: Social media and young people's mental health | Life in Likes - Children's Commissioners Report | Google Play Store | https://support.snapchat.com/en-US
https://netsanity.net/snapchat-parent-review/ | BT.com | Independent.co.uk

The internet – an inspiring and positive place

The internet is an amazing resource which enables children and young people to connect, communicate and be creative in a number of different ways, on a range of devices. However, the internet is always changing, and being able to keep up to date with your children's use of technology can be a challenge. You may sometimes feel that your children have better technical skills than you do, however children and young people still need advice and protection when it comes to managing their lives online.

Issues that your child may encounter on the internet will vary depending on their age and online activities. We have grouped potential online risks into these 4 categories.

Conduct:
Children need to be aware of the impact that their online activity can have on both themselves and other people, and the digital footprint that they create on the internet. It's easy to feel anonymous online and it's important that children are aware of who is able to view, and potentially share, the information that they may have posted. When using the internet, it's important to keep personal information safe and not share it with strangers. Discuss with your child the importance of reporting inappropriate conversations, messages, images and behaviours and how this can be done.

Content:
Some online content is not suitable for children and may be hurtful or harmful. This is true for content accessed and viewed via social networks, online games, blogs and websites. It's important for children to consider the reliability of online material and be aware that it might not be true or written with a bias. Children may need your help as they begin to assess content in this way. There can be legal consequences for using or downloading copyrighted content, without seeking the author's permission.

Contact:
It is important for children to realise that new friends made online may not be who they say they are and that once a friend is added to an online account, you may be sharing your personal information with them. Regularly reviewing friends lists and removing unwanted contacts is a useful step. Privacy settings online may also allow you to customise the information that each friend is able to access. If you have concerns that your child is, or has been, the subject of inappropriate sexual contact or approach by another person, it's vital that you report it to the police via the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (**www.ceop.police.uk**). If your child is the victim of cyberbullying, this can also be reported online and offline. Reinforce with your child the importance of telling a trusted adult straight away if someone is bullying them or making them feel uncomfortable, or if one of their friends is being bullied online.

Commercialism:
Young people's privacy and enjoyment online can sometimes be affected by advertising and marketing schemes, which can also mean inadvertently spending money online, for example within applications. Encourage your children to keep their personal information private, learn how to block both pop ups and spam emails, turn off in-app purchasing on devices where possible, and use a family email address when filling in online forms.

There are real advantages in maintaining an open dialogue with your child about their internet use. Not sure where to begin? These conversation starter suggestions can help.

1 Ask your children to tell you about the websites and apps they like to use and what they enjoy doing online.

2 Ask them about how they stay safe online. What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?

3 Ask them if they know where to go for help, where to find the safety advice, privacy settings and how to report or block on the services they use.

4 Encourage them to help someone! Perhaps they can show you how to do something better online or they might have a friend who would benefit from their help and support.

5 Think about how you each use the internet. What more could you do to use the internet together? Are there activities that you could enjoy as a family?

What can I do right now?

☐ Maintain an open dialogue with your child and encourage them to talk to you about their internet use: for example who they're talking to, services they're using, and any issues they may be experiencing.

☐ Create a family agreement to establish your children's boundaries, and your expectations, when on the internet.

☐ Give your child strategies to deal with any online content that they are not comfortable with – such as turning off the screen, telling an adult they trust and using online reporting facilities.

☐ Consider using filtering software to block unwanted content. In addition to filtering, remember that discussion with your child, and involvement in their internet use, are both effective ways to educate them about the internet.

☐ Encourage your children to 'think before you post.' Online actions can impact not only yourself but the lives of others. Content posted privately online can be publicly shared by others, and may remain online forever.

☐ Understand the law. Some online behaviour may break the law, for example when downloading or sharing content with others. Be able to recommend legal services.

☐ Familiarise yourself with the privacy settings and reporting features available on popular sites and services.

☐ If your child is being bullied online, save all available evidence and know where to report the incident, for example to the school, service provider, or the police if the law has been broken.

☐ Familiarise yourself with the age ratings for games and apps which can help to indicate the level and suitability of the content. Also see if online reviews are available from other parents as these may be helpful.

☐ Set up a family email address that your children can use when signing up to new games and websites online.

☐ Encourage your children to use nicknames (where possible) instead of their full name online, to protect their personal information, and create strong passwords for every account.

☐ Set up a PIN or password on devices to help protect personal information.

Sign up to our Childnet newsletter at **www.childnet.com**.

Help make sure that your children know how to stay safe online, by using our SMART Rules for primary aged children, or 5 Tips for Teens.

5 SMART Rules for primary aged children:

S **Safe:** Keep safe by being careful not to give out personal information when you're chatting or posting online. Personal information includes your email address, phone number and password.

M **Meet:** Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents' or carers' permission and even then only when they can be present. Remember online friends are still strangers even if you have been talking to them for a long time.

A **Accepting:** Accepting emails, messages, or opening files, images or texts from people you don't know or trust can lead to problems – they may contain viruses or nasty messages!

R **Reliable:** Someone online might lie about who they are and information on the internet may not be true. Always check information by looking at other websites, in books, or with someone who knows. If you like chatting online it's best to only chat to your real world friends and family.

T **Tell:** Tell a parent, carer or a trusted adult if someone, or something, makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.

5 Tips for Teens:

1 **Protect your online reputation:** use the tools provided by online services to manage your digital footprints and 'think before you post.' Content posted online can last forever and could be shared publicly by anyone.

2 **Know where to find help:** understand how to report to service providers and use blocking and deleting tools. If something happens that upsets you online, it's never too late to tell someone.

3 **Don't give in to pressure:** if you lose your inhibitions you've lost control; once you've pressed send you can't take it back.

4 **Respect the law:** use reliable services and know how to legally access the music, film and TV you want.

5 **Acknowledge your sources:** use trustworthy content and remember to give credit when using other people's work/ideas.

Further advice and resources:

www.childnet.com
www.saferinternet.org.uk

Childnet International