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Keeping Our Children Safe Online

As children become increasingly confident using technology, we would like to remind all parents of the importance of **monitoring their children's online activity and helping them make safe, responsible choices.**

We are aware that some primary-aged children are accessing social media, messaging apps and online gaming platforms that are designed for older users. These platforms can expose children to inappropriate content, contact with strangers, unkind messages and online bullying.

Apps and platforms to be aware of:

- **Discord (13+)** – A messaging platform where users can join group chats, share images and communicate through voice and video. Children may be exposed to inappropriate conversations or contact from people they do not know.
- **Snapchat (13+)** – Allows users to send photos and messages that may disappear, making conversations harder for parents to monitor.
- **TikTok (13+)** – A video-sharing platform where children may encounter unsuitable content or interact with strangers.
- **Instagram (13+)** – Allows users to share photos, videos and messages, with potential risks relating to privacy, inappropriate content and online bullying.
- **WhatsApp (13+ in the UK)** – Although commonly used for family communication, group chats can lead to disagreements, exclusion and unkind messages.
- **Roblox** – A gaming platform popular with younger children. Although it offers child accounts and parental controls, some games and communication features may still present risks.

How can parents help?

We strongly encourage all parents to:

- Regularly check the apps, games and group chats their children are accessing.
- Check age restrictions and ensure apps are appropriate for their child's age.
- Talk openly about online kindness, bullying and respectful communication.
- Remind children never to share personal information or communicate with strangers.
- Encourage children to tell a trusted adult immediately if they receive upsetting, threatening or unkind messages.
- Help children understand how to leave group chats, block users and report inappropriate behaviour.
- Set clear boundaries around screen time and device use.

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A reminder about online bullying

Unkind behaviour online can be just as upsetting as bullying in person. Group chats, exclusion, name-calling and hurtful messages can have a significant impact on children's wellbeing, even when these incidents happen outside school hours.

Please remind your child that **the same expectations of kindness, respect and responsibility apply online as they do in school.**

Where Can Parents Find Further Advice?

There are some excellent websites offering free advice to help parents keep their children safe online. We encourage you to explore the following resources:

- **NSPCC – Online Safety:** www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety
  Practical advice on keeping children safe, talking about online bullying and understanding the risks associated with different apps and games.
- **Internet Matters:** www.internetmatters.org
  Particularly useful for parents! Includes age-specific guidance, information about popular apps and step-by-step instructions for setting up parental controls.
- **UK Safer Internet Centre:** www.saferinternet.org.uk
  Helpful advice about social media, gaming, online friendships and how to support children when things go wrong online.
- **Childnet:** www.childnet.com
  Family-friendly resources, conversation starters and activities to help children develop safe and respectful online habits.

Please take a few minutes to check which apps your child is using, who they are communicating with and whether the platforms are appropriate for their age. Regular conversations and appropriate parental supervision can make a real difference in keeping children safe.

Together, we can help children be kind, confident and safe online.