NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

Education and Families
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Dear Parent/Carer,

<u>Internet safety and the use of social media</u>

As you may already know, it was National Internet Safety Day yesterday. As a school we are committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet and as such, we feel this is a good opportunity to highlight some valuable information about apps and the internet. Mobile devices and the use of apps can be great fun as well as a useful learning tool. However, the other side is that it can cause many problems socially too. Many of the issues that have been brought to our attention recently in our cluster schools, have involved the use of:

<u>Whats App</u> – An instant messaging app for smartphones. **The user agreement requires users to be age 16 or older.** Children are often creating groups to which others are joining. 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.

<u>Instagram</u> - an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service which enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms. **You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**

<u>Snapchat</u> - an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service. **You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**

<u>Roblox</u> is a free-to-play multiplayer gaming platform available on PC, mobile, and Xbox One that allows users to create and share their own games, as well as play other users' games. Players can send messages and chat. **The game is aimed at 7-to-18-year-olds, but anyone can use the platform.** Users under the age of 13 receive stricter settings if registered with the correct age. However, the creators recommend that parents of younger children set up a PIN with parental controls.

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The dangers of having accounts are:

• Your child may accept friend requests, or will have followers, they do not know in real life. This increases the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour. The general rule is - if they are not friends in real life, they should not be friends online.

• Language, games, groups, and content posted or shared on social media is **NOT** moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal, or unsuitable for your child.

• Photographs shared by users are **NOT** moderated and therefore your child is at more risk of being exposed to inappropriate images or even be naïve enough post their own.

• Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age exposes them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options.

• Social media sites can be exploited by bullies and for inappropriate contact.

• Social media sites cannot and do not verify its members, therefore, it is important to remember that if your son/daughter can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else.

• Many sites use targeted advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other appropriate nature, depending on the age they stated when they registered.

In general, occurrences and reported incidents of misuse of social media sites happen at home, after school hours when children have access to web sites that are blocked in school.

We strongly advise that access to these devices is monitored with a device free bedroom policy. Your children will complain - but it is about keeping them safe!

The most effective thing you can do is have a regular device catch up, talking through your child's use of apps, their followers, and the material they post.

Although we cannot control matters occurring out of school hours which is parental responsibility, we would recommend close monitoring of devices and apps being used so that inappropriate online behaviour is stopped before it spills over into school.

Here are some online links which may be helpful to you as you monitor your child's devices.

Keeping children safe online | NSPCC
Keeping children safe online - Parent's questions answered | Barnardo's
Home Safety Activities
Parents and Carers - UK Safer Internet Centre

Social Media Age Restrictions

Through lessons provided at school, assemblies, guest speakers, and Health and Wellbeing lessons, we do our best to provide our children with the awareness and knowledge they need. We want our children to recognise and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful behaviour and to respond appropriately by getting adult help and support straight away. Working together, we hope to support the children to become the responsible and safe cyber citizens of the future.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. In our crazy, busy world we appreciate how challenging it can be to monitor internet use and device apps. Hopefully there has been something of use to you in the information and links listed above.

Kind Regards,

Ed Clinton

Acting Head Teacher