



WHITMORE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Online Gaming and Socialising

Dear Parent/Carer,

As the children head into the Easter break, we would like to take the opportunity to make you aware of some of the negative impacts of children's increased socialising and gaming online, so we can support you to ensure your child is safe.

Due to current restrictions, more children are spending more time online through social media apps (such as Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram) and via gaming platforms (including tablets. Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo). Unfortunately, increased access to online socialising and gaming can also lead to an increase in risk to children's wellbeing and safety.

As a school, we have noted the increased number of behaviour issues including arguing and fighting; often as a direct consequence of children falling out online. We want to work in partnership with parents to reduce these incidents so children can enjoy gaming and socialising online safely.

What are the children's experiences online?

Today, children in Year 5 and 6 completed an anonymous survey so we could gauge some of their experiences online. The children were asked to be completely honest with their replies. The results from the survey showed:

- 37% of children said they do not tell parents/carers if somebody swears, calls them name or is 'nasty' online. Only 32% of children said they tell their parents/carers every time.
- 81% said other people swore at them online at least once. 27% of children said this happens a lot.
- 48% said they have said a swear word to people at least once online. 9% said they swear every time they go online
- 76% said they had been called names online. 43% said 'this happens a lot'.
- 51% said they had called other children names online. 20% said they do this 'a lot'.

How can parents/carers help?

During the Easter break, it will benefit children greatly to talk to them about:

1. What is acceptable and unacceptable online behaviour
2. Time limits and periods of the day when your child can go online
3. The importance of online 'stranger danger' and ideally only playing with people they know personally

Below are some links which will support you to keep your child safe online.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>



The school understands the social pressures children have to access social media and the pressure this can put on parents/carers. When talking to your child about the use of gaming and social media it is useful to refer to these facts:

Which social media services are age restricted?

WhatsApp have just announced a change to their terms and conditions for users based in Europe. **Users will now need to be 16 to use WhatsApp.**

Nearly all other social media services require **users to be at least 13 years of age** to access and use their services. This includes Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Musical.ly and Skype.

Whilst there is no age restriction for watching videos on YouTube, users need to be 13 or older to have their own YouTube account (enabling them to subscribe to other channels, like videos, post comments, share their own content and flag inappropriate content).

Fortnite

Fortnite currently has a **12 age rating from PEGI**, the European video game content rating system. "This game was rated PEGI 12 for frequent scenes of mild violence," says the PEGI blurb. **"It is not suitable for persons under 12 years of age."**

How can school help?

Children in school learn about online safety across the curriculum:

- Computing lessons, children will spend a half-term learning about Digital Literacy.
- Relationships and Health Education, children explore keeping safe online and learn how to behaviour appropriately online too.
- Assemblies programme supports children's understanding. This year, children have had two Anti-Bullying assemblies; a Safer Internet assembly and an assembly teaching them about the support they have through the NSPCC and ChildLine

The school is also updating key policies and systems including: Behaviour policy; Online Safety policy; Anti-Bullying policy; Computing User Agreement; Home School Agreement.

During the Summer Term, the school will continue to develop children's understanding of engaging online respectfully and safely. The school is determined to work collaboratively with children and their families to ensure children have improved experiences online.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,