



July 2018

Information to Parents or Carers

### Re: Important information on social media and e-safety

We are living at a time where social media and various apps are becoming increasingly popular. Although there are many positives with communications on various social media networks and the wealth of knowledge the internet can bring, there are also many risks that we also need to be aware of too. Not only do our students need to know the possible dangers, we realise that families also need to understand what these may be as well. The pace in which technology is evolving means that we need to be kept as up to date as possible to ensure our children are safe.

Unsupervised access and use of technology can lead to young people making mistakes and exposing themselves to serious harm. Our students have had various assemblies this year delivered by West Mercia Police and CLL activities to make them aware of these possible risks. However, we would really appreciate it if you could have these conversations with them at home too.

Here is some information on the most popular social media apps used by young people. The information has been taken from <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>.

### Instagram

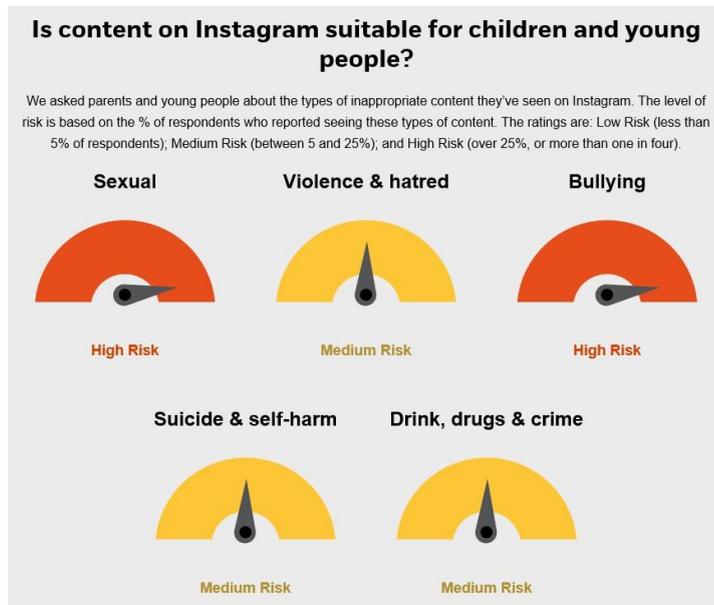


**The minimum age for using Instagram is 13.** Instagram is a picture and video sharing app. Users can post content and use hashtags to share

experiences, thoughts or memories with an online community. You can follow your friends, family, celebrities and even companies on Instagram. Instagram allows live streaming.

Setting up an account is extremely easy. There is no need to put your date of birth and any email address will do. Are you sure that the Instagram account your child has shown you is the only one? It may be worth checking!

You can 'like' posts and comment on them too. Are you sure you know what your child is 'liking'? This may be seen by future employers/the police, which may affect your child's future. Setting up an account is easy, even if you are underage. If your child is younger than 13, can you be sure they do not have an account?



## Snapchat

**The minimum age for using Snapchat is 13.** Snapchat is an app that lets you send a photo, short



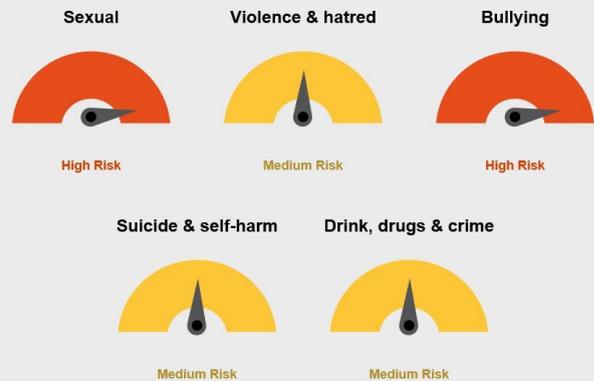
video or message to your contacts. The 'snap' appears on screen for up to 10 seconds before disappearing, or there is an option to have no time limit. There is also a feature called Snapchat Story that lets you share snaps in a sequence for up to 24 hours.

Your child can receive messages from people they do not know and if 'ghost mode' is not enabled, it shares their precise location.

Are you aware of what your child is posting and receiving? Although the 'snaps' disappear in 10 seconds, if someone takes a 'screenshot', that can be sent and spread around very quickly. As with Instagram, setting up an account is very easy, even if you are underage. If your child is under the age of 13, are you sure they do not have an account?

### Is content on Snapchat suitable for children and young people?

We asked parents and young people about the types of inappropriate content they've seen on Snapchat. The level of risk is based on the % of respondents who reported seeing these types of content. The ratings are: Low Risk (less than 5% of respondents); Medium Risk (between 5 and 25%); and High Risk (over 25%, or more than one in four).



## YouTube



**The minimum age for using YouTube is 13.** YouTube allows you to watch, create and comment on videos. You can create your own YouTube account, create a music playlist, and

even create your own channel, which means you will have a public profile. YouTube allows live streaming.

Anyone can comment on the videos posted and it is very easy to see content that is not appropriate.

Are you aware of what your child is watching? Are you aware of what your child is posting? If someone has posted a comment on the video, how has that affected your child? Would your child tell you? Do they have different accounts?

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For all three popular social media platforms/apps, the pictures and videos can be copied and shared very quickly and at great speed. What may have been posted for a few friends can very quickly be in the hands of the whole school, community and beyond.

## What you can do

- Check to see if your child has any of the apps in the picture on the right. These are some of the apps where your child could potentially be putting themselves at risk.
- Explain how you can use privacy settings to make sure that only approved friends can see their posts and images.
- Remind your child that anything that they post could be shared and made public. This could affect jobs in the future if they post something inappropriate.
- Explain that people may not be who they say they are online.
- Show your child how to report and block rude/offensive comments
- Encourage your child to talk to you about the apps they are using and who they are talking to online.
- **Please read the enclosed leaflet carefully** for more information on the risks your child may have to deal with. Thinking that any of the possible risks mentioned in the leaflet will not happen to your child is potentially very dangerous.



Thank you for taking the time to read this. Working together will ensure that we are all doing what we can to keep our children safe.

# Child Safety Online:

## A practical guide for parents and carers whose children are using social media

Social networking is hugely popular. Many young people are sophisticated in the way they use social media apps and websites, tailoring their communication for different audiences, and accessing them from a range of devices including smartphones, tablets, and games consoles.

But social media, like all forms of public communication, comes with some risks. Not all of these risks turn into actual problems; and if children never face any risks, they never learn how to deal with them. By helping your child understand what the risks are, you can play a big part in preventing them from turning into problems.

### Why children use social media



### Understand the risks children may need to deal with

#### What they could see or do:

- Seeing or sharing of violent, sexual and pornographic content
- Inaccurate or false information and extreme views
- Promotion of harmful behaviours including self-harm, anorexia and suicide
- Over-sharing of personal information
- Actively or unintentionally getting involved in bullying or hurtful behaviour

#### How this could affect them

- Fear of missing out leading to excessive use or exaggeration
- Getting upset by things they have seen and being uncertain about what to do
- Engaging, or being pressured into engaging in more risky behaviour either by accident or by design
- Developing unrealistic, and perhaps depressing ideals of body image and gender
- Becoming subject to peer pressure or interactions that are intense or too difficult to handle
- Creating an online reputation that may create problems for them in the future

#### Who they might meet:

- People who might bully, intimidate or frighten
- People posing behind fake profiles for:
  - Mischief-making
  - Sexual grooming and stalking
  - Blackmail and extortion
  - Identity theft and hacking

## Practical tips to help minimise the risks your child might face

It's good practice for apps and websites to have safety advice and well-designed safety features which can make a real difference to how safe your child will be when using them.

Work through safety and privacy features on the apps that your child is using, or might use. Make sure they understand the point of these and how to use them. Don't be put off by believing your child knows more than you: the tools are actually quite easy to manage.

- **Ask them to show you** which social media apps they use and what they like about them. Talk about how they use them and what makes them so engaging.
- **Explain** how you can use privacy settings to make sure only approved friends can see posts & images.
- **Check if any of their apps have 'geo-location'** enabled, sharing their location unintentionally.
- **Show them how to report offensive comments** or block people who upset them.
- **Check 'tagging' settings** so that when others are posting or sharing photos online, your child's identity is not revealed. Also, get people's consent before sharing photos.
- Encourage your child to **come and talk to you** if they see anything that upsets them.

## Keep talking and stay involved

In a mobile age, children can't be completely protected, even by the best privacy controls; another child may use different settings. So it's important to keep talking to your child about the implications of social media. Getting a sense of what they think is a useful place to start; you may be surprised by how much thought they may have given to the issues.

Encourage your child to think carefully about the way they, and others behave online, and how they might deal with difficult situations.

- People may **not always be who they say they are** online: how can this create problems?
- Why is it **unwise to meet** anyone in the real world that you've only ever met online?
- Even if you think your messages are private, remember that words and images can always be **captured and broadcast**.
- People **present themselves differently online** - do they really look like that? Are they always having that good a time?
- Be aware that screens, and especially being anonymous, can lead people to say things they **wouldn't say to someone's face**.
- What does **being a good friend and a likeable person** online look like?
- There can be **pressure to be part of a particular group** online or to be seen to be **following a certain set of ideas**. How can you take a step back and make your own decisions?

## For more information

You can find out more about how children use social media, the apps they use, the risks they face, how to use privacy settings, and advice and tips about how to talk to your children at:

- [www.childnet.com/sns](http://www.childnet.com/sns)
- [www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)
- [www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety)
- [www.parentzone.org.uk](http://www.parentzone.org.uk)
- [www.thinkyouknow.co.uk/parents](http://www.thinkyouknow.co.uk/parents)
- [www.askaboutgames.com](http://www.askaboutgames.com)

## To make a report

Concerned about online grooming or sexual behaviour online? Contact CEOP: [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

If you stumble across criminal sexual or obscene content on the internet you should report it to the Internet Watch Foundation: [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)