

Dear Parents/ Carers

Woodlands Academy of Learning is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet and as such, we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern, due to the increase of inappropriate use of social media platforms.

We have been dealing with an increasing number of issues arising in year 6 due to conversations on online messaging services such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook etc. Children are often in group chats and a lot of unkind and threatening words are being said over these groups, children are falling out and groups of children are encouraging negative behaviours. Issues then arise at school, children are upset, arguments are continuing and friendships are breaking down. This takes staff a large amount of time to resolve and this then impacts on their learning.

Although we are constantly educating children about the importance of using the internet safely, we do not have the resources or the jurisdiction to resolve every issue that takes place out of school hours. In order to maintain the safety of the children of Woodlands Academy it is vitally important that we work together to raise awareness and increase understanding of the potential dangers in this area. Primarily, these occurrences and reported incidents of misuse of social media sites happen at home, after school hours when children have access to websites that are blocked in school.

WhatsApp requires everyone to be 16 years old before they create an account and use WhatsApp.

Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and TikTok require everyone to be 13 years old before they can create or use an account.

If your child has created an account, and they are under the legal age limit, it is recommended you delete the app. If you continue to allow your child to access these apps, we would advise you to closely monitor what they have written and received. Children are responsible for the words and actions used within the chat, and these are recorded for all to see. As adults, it is important that we guide and control what the children are exposed to. Teaching your child only to write something they would happily say in front of you or to the person themselves is a good stepping stone. We would also advise a device free bedroom policy after bedtime to allow for uninterrupted sleep and rest.

Although we cannot govern matters occurring out of school hours which is parental responsibility, we will take action (such as reporting under age profiles) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our pupils, including reporting the use of inappropriate images of young people to the police (as this is a legal matter) and inappropriate text messages.

Thank you for your support in this matter and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Thank you

Mrs Jayne Graham