



CITY OF COVENTRY

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Online Safety

4th March 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

As reported recently in Friday Focus we are having more and more online issues falling into school, particularly with Years 5&6.

Being unkind online

It can be very easy online for children to behave in a way that they wouldn't if they were face to face with each other. Can we please ask that you talk to your child about how they speak to others online and encourage them to talk to people online with respect and kindness, like they would if they were face-to-face. How they act online should be how they behave on the school playground when they are following school rules. Here are some examples of what being unkind looks like online:

- Sending nasty or hurtful messages
- Leaving unkind comments
- Sharing photographs of somebody else without their permission
- Excluding somebody on purpose
- Impersonating somebody with a fake account
- Telling/sharing lies

The above might happen whilst your child is gaming online or whilst using social media or messaging apps e.g. WhatsApp.

WhatsApp

Most of the issues parents and children are reporting arise from children using WhatsApp. WhatsApp has an age rating of 16. Age ratings are in place to help protect your child and it is important to check the age rating of what your child is accessing. No child at Coundon Primary should be using this messaging app.

WhatsApp is a free messaging app that allows you to send messages and videos. One of the main features is that it has a Group chat function that are set up by one person (who is the admin). Everybody in the group, even if they're not one of your child's phone contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group. It is these large groups where issues are arising. Often children being included in chats with peers who are not in their social grouping in school.





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We are hearing in school that WhatsApp is being used in instances of online bullying, sending nasty messages or sharing images of other children without their permission to embarrass them. It's important to have regular chats with your child about their online life and that they understand that they must talk to you or another trusted adult if they are being bullied. There is a helpful article from BullyingUK which talks about what to do if you are being bullied online:

<https://www.bullying.co.uk/cyberbullying/what-to-do-if-you-re-being-bullied-on-a-social-network/>

It is important to note that whilst age ratings do allow you to see if something may be appropriate for your child, it is also important to review the content yourself. This will allow you to make an informed decision as to whether it is suitable for your child to access and if it would be beneficial to apply further parental controls. Parent Zone have published this article about why age ratings matter: <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/age-ratings>

This is a safeguarding concern and if we continue to receive reports of inappropriate online access we will be making referrals to Coventry MASH to be investigated further. Can I please ask that we work together in ensuring our pupils are safe and not exposed to unkindness through online bullying.

Kind Regards

Natasha Maude
Headteacher

