



# SOCIAL NETWORKING

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to the first edition of our new Key Stage 3 e-safety newsletter for Parents/Carers. As you know the Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School take every aspect of your child's safety very seriously. Subsequently our Safeguarding Team has decided to produce a regular e-safety newsletter, designed to give you advice on how to keep your child safe online. In our debut edition we are focusing on providing you with information and guidance on **social networking**. **Child psychologist Dr Richard Woolfson believes social media has removed the barriers between a young person's public and private self, leaving them vulnerable and exposed to danger by compulsive sharing online.** For this reason we believe it is important to know what age restrictions are in place for each social media app and why these restrictions have deemed to be necessary.

The majority of information in this newsletter is taken from the NSPCC website and [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

## THE STATISTICS

The NSPCC conducted an online survey, which yielded the findings below:

- 22% of 8 to 12 year olds have social media accounts (Ofcom, 2013)
- Around 59% of children have already used a social network by the time they are 10 ([knowthenet.org.uk](http://knowthenet.org.uk))
- 43% have messaged strangers online by the age of 12 ([knowthenet.org.uk](http://knowthenet.org.uk))
- Around half of 11 and 12 year olds in the UK have an underage profile.
- 23% of 11 and 12 year olds with a social networking site profile say they have been upset by something on it in the past 12 months.
- 18% of these felt upset or scared about it for weeks or months after the incident occurred.
- 20% experienced something that upset them every day or almost every day.
- 62% of these experiences were caused by strangers or people they only knew online.
- Nearly half (45%) of parents whose child had an underage profile on Facebook were unaware of the minimum age of 13 requirement (Ofcom, 2013).

## What is a social networking site?

Social networking sites allow you to talk to other people, exchange pictures or chat to friends. The most popular sites are listed below

Network	Min. Age	Type
FACEBOOK	13	Sharing information, photos and instant messaging.
INSTAGRAM	13	Sharing and commenting on photographs.
YOU TUBE	13	Sharing and commenting on videos.
TWITTER	13	Sharing and following text updates.
WHATSAPP	13	Instant messaging service.
MUSICAL.LY	13	Sharing and commenting on photos and videos
SNAP CHAT	13	Video calling and messaging.



## Why is there a minimum age requirement?

There are several reasons for a minimum age requirement. Much relates to data collection and storage, and has its origins in the USA. There are also valid concerns regarding young children's ability to deal with inappropriate content, cyberbullying, online risk-taking, and grooming.

When you sign up for a social networking site you agree to terms and conditions, and in many cases confirm you are over 13 years of age.

It is worth noting that while Instagram does not ask for age confirmation, its privacy policy (below) makes it clear children should be over 13. It also has fewer safety controls than Facebook, and can pose a higher risk due to the nature of photographs and less control over who can see them.

### **Whatsapp**

Mobile messaging app WhatsApp requires members to be at **least 16 years of age**. The greatest proportion of internet activity takes place when children reach 11 years of age; this is when they are likely to first post an image or video of themselves, post a nasty comment online and set up a fake social media profile. When using WhatsApp, the dangers of exposure to inappropriate material increase, as when images or material is sent, it is saved directly to their phone. Also the privacy settings are minimal on WhatsApp, where friends can add children to random groups, which automatically shares their number with all those in the group, whether they are known to them or not, effectively meaning your child's number has been passed on to strangers.



### **Snapchat**

Snapchat allows users to send photos and videos that are deleted a few seconds after they are received (the sender chooses how long the message displays for). However, a recipient can take a screen shot of the photo and then keep it: users are notified if this happens but there is nothing they can do if someone else takes a screen shot. There is also nothing to stop that person from sharing the message, picture or video all over the internet. This is a growing app which is currently processing over 30 million messages a day. The feeling of safety in thinking that a message will be deleted can lure users into sharing more than they would if they thought picture or video could be kept so you need to be sure pupils are aware of the dangers. One of the more dangerous features of Snapchat is "Snap Map" which allows the user's location to be shared among "friends". This feature broadcasts the exact location to "friends" on a map, which is accurate enough to determine the location of the user. This information is enough to build up a picture of where you live, your travel route and where you go to school. **This is a serious safeguarding concern for children.**



## What is a 'streak' on Snapchat?

The term 'having a streak' means continuously sending pictures to that person every day. If one child doesn't message (Snap) the other, they will lose the streak. One of the greatest dangers of this feature is that some children allow friends to have their log-in details in case they forget to keep the streak going, in effect losing control of their account. Allowing other people to access and operate an account can have serious repercussions.

## What are the risks of not keeping your social media accounts on private settings?

### **GROOMING**

Grooming is a process used by people with a sexual interest in children to attempt to engage them in sexual acts either over the internet or in person. People may target children in a variety of ways, including via social networking, online chatrooms or gaming sites. They can pretend to be someone else, for example a child, to engage in conversation, and show an interest in the children masquerading as a friend.

It is important that children understand that people like this exist and that they should never do anything online or offline that they are uncomfortable with. Grooming behaviour manipulates children in order to gain control over them: it may start by asking a child to engage in things slowly, for example a rude joke, sharing a photo, and progress from that point as the child may feel they have already done something wrong and be more reluctant to speak to an adult for fear of getting into trouble.

It is vital that as a parent or carer you should be approachable so that if your child is concerned about something, they know they can talk to you.

### Who is your child 'friends' with?

It is vital you check your child's 'friends' list. Are these all people your child actually knows? What information are the children publishing online? Look through your child's information feed. Many children will have indirectly or directly revealed to strangers:

- what school they go to
- who their friends are
- what their interests are
- where they like to hang out with friends
- where they live

All of this information may be readily available on your child's page and leave them open to grooming, putting them at risk.

### LOSING CONTROL OVER PICTURES AND VIDEO

*The following guidance is taken from the CEOP 'Thinkuknow' website:*

Pictures and videos can be copied, shared and spread at great speed. What may have started as being posted for a few friends, can very quickly end up in the hands of the entire school and beyond. Some young people have posted or sent sexualised pictures of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend and found them shared further – see our film 'Exposed' for more advice and information on this area. Some of the main risks with this type of image being in the hands of someone else include:

**Bullying** – young people can be bullied by others about the content of pictures

**Distress** – knowing that other people that they do not know are looking at personal pictures can be very upsetting

**Blackmail** – if the images end up in the hands of someone with bad intentions, they may be used to attempt to manipulate the child

**Reputation** – once something is online it is very difficult to remove. Therefore images can become part of a young person's 'digital footprint' and potentially affect them in the long-term, such as if someone searches their name as part of a job interview.

### How can I talk to my child about social networking and the risks attached?

- **Talk to your child about what they're up to online.** Which sites are the members of? Are their online 'friends' people they know in the real world or have they added strangers to boost their friend numbers? How are they communicating with people they don't know? What information are they sharing?
- **Watch Thinkuknow films and cartoons with your child.** You can also visit <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/> for videos on e-safety to watch with your child, and [http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/8\\_10/control/social/](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/8_10/control/social/) for further ways to talk to your child about the associated risks of social networking sites.
- **Keep up-to-date with your child's development online.** Children will be developing new skills and it is important you know what they are. If you are helping your child use a social networking site, make sure you monitor it regularly, but bear in mind that most instant messaging services are just that- instant- and you may not be able to see conversations they have had with 'friends' once it has been closed.
- **Set boundaries in the online world just as you would in the real world.** How long is your child online for? Who are they talking to? Where is the computer?
- **Keep all equipment that connects to the internet in a family space.** It is easier to check what your child can see if the computer is in a shared family area. It also reduces the opportunity your child will have for risky behaviour.
- **Remove all technology from bedrooms at bedtime.** The temptation for children to keep checking a phone that vibrates, beeps or rings is extremely high and that won't diminish at night time. If your child needs a morning alarm to wake up **buy your child an alarm clock** rather than relying on their mobile phone, this will allow them a good night's sleep.

Social networking is increasingly an everyday part of life for our children, and while we want to encourage them to enjoy what these sites have to offer, it is vital we keep our children safe. We hope that you find this letter helpful, and will issue further guidance next term.

**Safeguarding Team – Mr Walton, Mrs McLoughlin, Mrs Gray & Mr Brown**