



The Acorns Primary
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Executive Headteacher
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Dear Parents & Carers,

We have taken the decision to write to all the parents and carers of our Key Stage 2 pupils regarding some ongoing issues we are having in school with incorrect use of technology and social media by the pupils when outside of school.

As we experience most years in school, many of our Key Stage 2 pupils have now got their own mobile phone and are often involved in various forms of social media communication, such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Xbox Live. As the children are not allowed their phones with them in school, this communication is not taking place during school hours.

A few examples of this communication have been shared with us and we regard some of the content of these discussions and group chats to be inappropriate, discriminatory and, in some cases, could be classed as bullying.

We work hard in school to teach children about safe internet usage and about the perils of social media. However, this is a lot to process for pupils so young and often they do not realise the long-term implications of their actions, particularly in terms of messages being saved and screenshot by others, so even if they delete them, they are likely to remain on at least one person's phone as evidence.

The chats taking place via messaging services and Xbox Live are now being brought in to school, with a focus being removed from learning because pupils are consumed by goings-on outside of school. In some circumstances, both pupils and parents are wanting school to see and address the children's behaviour via social media in the evenings and at weekends. However, this is not our role and we cannot enforce parents to adhere to recommendations, only advise.

Advice: Best practice in homes is to have an 'open phone' policy with your children, whereby they are aware that their parents and carers can, and will, look at their phone content from time to time. This also encourages the children to be open and honest about what they are doing on their phones, and are more likely to approach parents and carers if they become unhappy about the content of a chat or photo, for example. So, if you have not recently seen the content of your child's group chats, please consider doing this, to ensure you are keeping them safe and encouraging open communication with adults. Please can I also remind you, as we do with the children, that the **legal age for having a Facebook account is 13 years old and the legal age for WhatsApp was raised from 13 to 16 in 2018.** If you are unhappy with what you see on your child's phone, please consider whether they are developmentally mature enough to cope with the potential hazards of owning a phone.

On our school website homepage, we have placed a link to a document produced by the Safeguarding Team, which is a Library of Social Media. I would urge you all to look at it and consider whether you are confident that you know what apps are on your child's phone, and what they are used for. The staff and I have found this a very useful tool and hugely enlightening, both as professionals and for many of us, as parents too.

We would really like to continue to work with parents and carers to ensure that our children are knowledgeable and able to keep themselves safe when using social media. So if you have any questions, queries or suggestions, please do get in touch with me.

Kind regards,

Mrs H. Broom

Executive Headteacher