

Misson Primary School

You already have your wings, we will help you fly



Wednesday 18th October 2023

Dear Parents and Carers of Y5 and Y6,

Social Media use outside of school

We are writing to advise you of a few concerns that we have regarding children's use of social media outside of school during evenings and weekends.

In recent years, we have had to manage an increasing number of occurrences of unkind behaviour and cyberbullying on social media and instant messaging apps outside of school. We have had problems of this sort in Y5/6 already this year, specifically around the use of WhatsApp as a tool to exclude or be unkind about other children.

This is not in line with our ethos or values as a school.

Most Social Media apps are for pupils 13 years and over. WhatsApp recently announced a change to their terms and conditions for users based in Europe. Users need to be 16 to use WhatsApp. This is partly because children younger than this (especially those of primary school age) lack the social skills and the maturity to manage friendships positively and to engage in online interactions without causing harm to themselves or others. In most cases, children find themselves taking part in a form of cyberbullying without meaning to because they are not old enough to recognise the significance of their behaviour online.

We strongly recommend that you do not allow your child to use these apps. If you decide to allow your child to access social media, we ask for your vigilance. Just like their interactions in person, children's online interactions require supervision and support.

The right approach to monitoring will vary from family to family but some strategies that are known to be successful include:

- Monitoring their phones for the apps that are downloaded
- Using the apps your child is accessing yourself so that you understand what is involved
- Enacting parental controls on phones and consoles
- Reviewing the messages they send and receive on platforms and apps - making monitoring part of a daily or weekly routine
- Setting expectations about what space (preferably communal) and times they have access to devices
- Encouraging them to share or discuss with you what they are doing.

We are asking for your partnership in dealing with this, as this is happening outside of school. As a school we are responding to this with additional teaching during Computing, and PSHE lessons and in 1:1 conversations or teaching opportunities as they arise. We encourage all parents who have concerns about their child's online experiences to contact us to discuss them, especially around the use of social media.

Please also spend a few minutes looking at the resources we have uploaded on our website for more detailed advice and information about internet safety.

Thank you for your support,

Mr Jones and Mr Birch