



Coopers Lane Primary School

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Head Teacher: Mr Paul Hooper

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Dear Mums, Dads and Carers

Re: Internet safety and the use of Social Media

Coopers Lane Primary School 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 growing concern, due to an increase in the inappropriate use of Instagram, Facebook and other social media sites.

Some of the issues that have been brought to our attention this year have involved the use of:

- Instagram - an online photo/video sharing and social networking service, which enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms. You are required **to be at least 13 years old** before you can create an account on Instagram.
- Facebook - a social networking site. You are required **to be at least 13 years old** before you can create an account on Facebook.
- OoVoo – a video and messaging app which allows video chats of up to 12 people at one time. You are required **to be at least 13 years old** before you can create an account on Oovoo.
- Whats App – an instant messaging app for smartphones. The user agreement requires users **to be aged 16 or older**.

We understand that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the ways that our children are using new and ever changing technologies. Our children are immersed in a society that has become dependent on powerful computers, including smart phones, iPads, interactive online games and virtual communities. Websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Skype, Whats App, Viber and OoVoo offer fantastic opportunities for communication and social connections; however, they are created with their audience in mind, especially sites such as Facebook and Instagram which are specifically for those **over 13 years old**.

When monitoring your son/daughter's internet use, please remind yourself of the concerns of social media:

- Many sites use 'targeted' advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other inappropriate nature, depending on the age they have stated when they registered.
- They may have lied about their age to create an account, making them appear older than they are, which increases this risk.
- Young people may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life, which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour. The general rule is: if they aren't friends in real life, they shouldn't be 'friends' online.
- Language, games, groups and content posted on social media is NOT moderated, and can therefore be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children.
- Photographs shared by users are NOT moderated and therefore young people could be exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own.
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options.
- Social media sites can be exploited by bullies and for inappropriate contact.
- Social media sites cannot and do not verify their members; therefore, it is important to remember that if your son/daughter can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else.



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Primarily, reported incidents of misuse of social media sites happen at home, after school hours, when children have access to web sites that are blocked in school. With this in mind, and in response to concerned parents and carers who have asked for advice regarding internet safety, we feel it is important to highlight the risks of unregulated use of such sites. This will hopefully support you to make informed decisions as to whether to allow your child to have online profiles or not, and when and how to monitor their use. *Please note: We strongly 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 are parental responsibilities, 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. This includes reporting the use/sharing of inappropriate images of young people to the police, as this is a legal matter. This also refers to inappropriate texts and online messages.

If you decide to allow your child to have an online profile, we strongly advise that you:

- Check their profile is set to private and that only their friends can see information they post.
- Monitor your child's social media use and talk to them about safe and appropriate online behaviour.
- Monitor your child's use of language and how they communicate to other people, ensuring profanity is discouraged.
- Set up your own profiles so you understand how the site works and ask them to have you as their friend on their profile.
- Make sure your son/daughter understand the rules for staying safe online.

We recommend that all parents visit the CEOP Think U Know website for more information on keeping your child safe online www.thinkuknow.co.uk , www.net-aware.org.uk and www.getsafeonline.org

Through lessons provided at school, assemblies, guest speakers, and PSHE lessons, we do our best to provide our children with the awareness and knowledge they need in order to recognise and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful behaviour and to respond appropriately. However, it is only through a collaborative effort between parents and school that we will succeed in creating responsible, safe cyber citizens.

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact your child's class teacher, myself or any other member of our senior leadership team.

Thank you for your support with this matter.



Tali Bonner
Deputy Head