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Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Internet safety and the use of Social Media and mobile technology.

Over the last few years, an increasing number of internet apps and games have been introduced to our children. Many are safe and offer great learning opportunities but unfortunately a number of them are not. This letter is to share with you some of the apps and games that your young people might be using at home. It is to alert you to the many potential dangers for children using iPads, computers and mobile phones at home.

Keeping Your Child Safe

Buckton Vale Primary School is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet and mobile technologies; as such, we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a growing concern, due to the increase in inappropriate use of Whatsapp group chat, Skype and Instagram, Snap chat and more recently Snap map.

Many of the issues that have been brought to our attention recently have involved the use of:

- **Instagram** – an online mobile photo sharing, 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.
- **Roblox** - This is an online game aimed at young children. Roblox is a massive multiplayer online platform that allows users to design their own games and play a wide variety of different types of games created by the developer or other users. You do not need an account for Roblox and once on the site you can access hundreds of games. We advise parents whose children use this game log into: <https://corp.roblox.com/parents/> in order to read the documentation and advice to keep children safe.
- **Vault** – This looks like a basic calculator. You need to enter a secret code into the calculator to reveal hidden files. It stores hidden photographs and videos on a cloud that can be synced to other devices. There have been reports across the authority that some of the photographs on this app are unsuitable for young people.
- **Calc** – Another app disguised as a calculator when opened. It hides most file type documents, personal notes, photos, videos and music. It requires a secret password to open.
- **Whats App** – An instant messaging app for smartphones. The user agreement requires users to be age 13 or older. Children are often creating 'groups' to which others are joining. This means that all information is shared with anyone who is in the group so privacy is lost and in some cases strangers have been added to the group. There are also reports of inappropriate photographs being shared and unkind comments made.

• **Snap Chat and ‘Snap Map’**. - This location based map allows users to see where in the country their Snapchat contacts are, as well as seeing location based photos and videos. The Snap Map shows a user’s Bitmoji, their cartoon avatar within Snapchat, pinpointed on a world map. Users can then zoom into the map to see the exact location of their friends.

How to access Snap Maps

To access the Snap Map in the latest update of the Snapchat app, users need to go to their camera screen within Snapchat and zoom out using two fingers. This will then launch the Snap Maps screen and will allow a user to see their friend’s locations.

Choose who can see your location

It is important to be careful about whom you share your location with, as it can allow people to build up a picture of where you live, go to school and spend your time.

Given how specific this new feature is on Snapchat - giving your location to a precise pinpoint on a map - we would encourage users not to share their location, especially with people they don’t know in person.

There are three settings for sharing your location on the map, these are; Ghost mode, My Friends, and Select Friends. But what do these settings mean?

Ghost Mode

Ghost Mode means that you are the only person who can see your location on the map.

Within Ghost Mode you can still see the locations of your friends but they will be unable to see you. This setting will ensure that you have complete control over who knows your location.

My Friends

My Friends means that all of your contacts on Snapchat can see your location. If turning on this setting then it would be important for users to review their Snapchat contacts and also make sure that they never add someone they don’t know in person onto Snapchat.

Select Friends

This setting allows users to look through their friend list and then decide which of their friends they want to be able to view their location. This setting gives users the opportunity to control who can view their location.

Changing settings

When first opening the Snap Map users get to make a decision of who they want to be able to view their location. Once these settings are in place they can always be changed in Snapchat’s settings. This can be done in two ways:

In the Snapchat settings

In the Snapchat screen click on the Settings (cog) icon> click on ‘see my location’ > Choose the setting which suits you

On the Snap Map

Top tips

Sharing location can be a risky thing to do. Our tips for location sharing are:

- Only share your location with people you know in person. Never share your location with strangers.
- Don’t add contacts to Snapchat if you don’t know them in person.
- Regularly review your settings and take an active decision about whether you want people to know your location. Remember you can switch this off at any time. Think about where you’re sharing your location. Location services such as Snap Maps can lead people to your house. Think about what times you’re on the app and whether these are locations you want to share – if not, then turn this off within your settings.

Video guide to Tik Tok (Musical.ly)

Channel 4 News reported that children as young as nine were being groomed and bombarded with explicit messages on the popular social media app Tik Tok. Tik Tok is an entertainment social network for creating and sharing short videos. Tik Tok’s terms prohibits the use of the app by anyone under the age of 13. If you learn that your child has registered for a Tik Tok account you can alert them at privacy@tiktok.com

New games and apps regularly uploaded.

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, WhatsApp, Snap chat and Snap map, to name but a few, 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 child'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 stated when they registered. They may have lied about their age to get an account, making them appear older than they are, increasing this risk.
- Young people may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life. This could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour. The general rule is, if **they are not friends in real life, they shouldn't be 'friends' online.**
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on social media is NOT moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for young people.
- Photographs shared by users are **NOT moderated** and therefore young people could be exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own. These photographs can also be edited once posted and by anyone.
- 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 its members, therefore, it is important to remember that if your child can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else.

Primarily, these occurrences and 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 who have asked for advice regarding internet safety, we feel it important to point out to parents the risks of unregulated use of such sites and mobile phones, so you can make informed decisions as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not and when and how to monitor their use, particularly at night time. **We strongly advise a device free bedroom policy after bedtime to allow for uninterrupted sleep and rest as well as to help keep children safe.**

Although we cannot govern matters occurring out of school hours which is parental responsibility, 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, including reporting the use of inappropriate images of young people to the police, as this is a legal matter. This also refers to inappropriate text messages.

Should you decide to allow your child to have an online profile or use of mobile apps we strongly advise you:

- Check their profile is set to private.
- Monitor your child's use and talk to them about safe and appropriate online behaviour such as not sharing personal information and not posting or messaging offensive /inappropriate messages or photos.
- Monitor your child's use of language and how they communicate to other people, ensuring profanity is discouraged.
- Have a look at advice for parents on the social media sites.

Our top tips to keep children safe:

1. Always keep your profile private.
2. Never accept friends you do not know in real life.
3. Never post anything which could reveal your identity including photographs wearing school uniform where possible.
4. Never post anything you wouldn't want your parents or teachers to see.
5. Never agree to meet somebody you only know online without telling a trusted adult.
6. Always tell someone if you feel threatened or someone upsets you.

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 teachers that we will succeed in creating responsible and safe cyber citizens.

Mobile Phones in School

A number of children now bring mobile phones to school. The children are already aware that the rule is to ensure any phones are turned to either off or silent and left in the school office. They are collectable at the end of the school day. No mobile phones should be left in bags for any reason.

Thank you for working in partnership with school to keep our children safe.

Yours faithfully,

D Brown

Mrs D Brown

Headteacher

K Quinn

Mrs K Quinn

Deputy Headteacher & Safeguarding Lead



Buckton Vale
Primary School

**Internet Safety
Information for
parents**

October 2018