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Dear Parent/Carer,

As you may be aware from our E-Safety section on the website we continually seek opportunities to educate our students about how to stay safe online. For many this may not apply yet but you may want to familiarise yourself with these apps as some children are downloading and using them.

I have no doubt that you share our concerns around some of the dangers of the online world. That is why, as part of our partnership working with the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children's Board) I feel it is appropriate to share some information regarding various online apps which may be accessible to and may be in use by some children. Some of these apps your children may not access now but we thought it useful for you to know of the potential apps they may use, especially for those children heading in to secondary schools. It may also be of use for those who have older siblings.

The apps are as follows:

Snapchat Streaks

Young people are giving out their passwords to their accounts to friends in order that friends might continue their 'snapchat streaks' when they themselves cannot be on snapchat. No young person should give away their passwords to anyone other than their parents or carers. Passwords should not be given out to friends. Parents/carers should check their children's passwords for all their social media accounts and reinforce to them the importance of keeping these confidential. Snapchat has also introduced a new tracker update where you can view the exact location of your friends. It can give you the area, town and street and if you zoom in it will give you the position of the house on the street and your exact location will be revealed. To disable this go into ghost mode.

Blue Whale

This is a game played via many social media platforms. Players are given a master who controls them for 50 days. Each day they are given a task to complete and these tasks increase in intensity over the course of the 50 day period. One task, for example, might be to scratch a blue whale somewhere on their body. On the 50th day the masters behind the game instruct the young people to commit suicide. This game has already claimed several lives. Parents/carers should check devices to ensure that their children do not have this game.

SAYAT.ME

This public website allows users and others to leave anonymous posts about other people. Parents/carers should monitor their children's use of social media and to ensure that they do not use this particular social media platform.

Pickle

This app encourages users to participate in, and film, a dare for which they will receive payment. Dares are posted anonymously. It suggests that it is 'an easy way to make money'. There are many obvious safeguarding concerns with this app. Parents/carers should check devices to ensure that their children do not have this app.



Yellow

An app where under-18s can post profile pictures to engage in liking and dating and other conversations of a sexual nature. The app can be linked to Snapchat accounts and there have been many concerns about requests from users of this app for inappropriate pictures. With many young people having Snapchat, and potential access to this app, parents/carers should talk to their children about the dangers of engaging with others via this app. Clear advice is that young people should not have or use this app.

Instagram

There are some sites on Instagram requesting that young people send in 'mugshots' of themselves. Instagram and Police Support Officers have been made aware of the existence of these sites. No young person should send or post a 'mugshot' of themselves (or of another young person) to these sites and no young person should make any comments on these sites. No young person should be attempting to create such sites on Instagram or any other social media platform. Parents/carers should check that their children are not in any way linked to these sites and to use the reporting functions on Instagram as appropriate.

13 Reasons Why

This is a Netflix programme adapted from the book that discusses many serious issues, including suicide, depression and self-harm. Many young people appear to be watching this programme and are openly discussing its contents with their friends. Several Mental Health charities have expressed their concerns over the programme – the content of which is, in places (including the suicide itself), quite graphic. There are concerns that this programme romanticises suicide. Following many public concerns Netflix have announced that they will add an on-screen warning to the programme.

I hope that you find this information as useful as we have. I am sure that you will take time to discuss the contents of this letter with your child/ren.

Many thanks for your continued support in this matter.

Kind Regards

Lisa Telling
Executive Head Teacher

H/E Safety: Letter over apps concerns

