



St Teresa's Catholic Primary School

"With Jesus we Live, Love and Learn."

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Dear Parents and Carers of Year 4 and 5,

I hope this letter finds you well. I write to you with a matter of significant importance regarding the use of **WhatsApp** by our key stage two students. I recently addressed the year 6 parents on this matter but now feel the need to write to parents in year 5 and 4 as well.

Year after year, we have encountered issues stemming from the use of WhatsApp among our pupils at the top end of the school. This includes children saying unkind things to one another, annoying one another in large "group chats", sharing upsetting content, and distributing such material. This had predominantly been a year 5 and 6 issue in the past.

The impact of these incidents on our school community is profound, leading to behavioural challenges in school, distressed children, the need for numerous parental meetings and the creation of social and emotional interventions with children who are upset by what has been said or seen.

It is crucial to understand that WhatsApp is a platform designed for individuals aged **13 and above**.

Primary-aged child not should have access to this application. The sheer number of hours our staff spend addressing WhatsApp-related problems in Ks2 each year is a clear indication that our pupils are not yet equipped with the maturity required to handle the responsibilities and risks associated with this app.

We have begun to receive reports from students in Year 4 that they too use WhatsApp and we are concerned that this problem may now move further down the school.

I urge each and every one of you to remove WhatsApp from your child's devices immediately. Overleaf, you will find our latest internet safety newsletter, which outlines the dangers of WhatsApp for children under 13 and provides guidance on the safety controls available should you decide to allow your child to use the app despite the age restriction.

Your support in this matter is essential. Together, we can ensure a safe and nurturing environment for our pupils, where they can thrive academically and socially without the distractions and potential harms of inappropriate digital platforms.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the school's pastoral team.

Sincerely,

Mr J Bottjer (Head Teacher, St Teresa's Catholic Primary School)



How can I find age-appropriate games?

Do you need suggestions on age-appropriate games? You could use either of the following websites to search suitable games.

Remember, PEGI rates the gameplay so whilst it is important to review age ratings, you must also check if it has a communication feature as this might mean you decide a game is not suitable for your child.

- <https://www.askaboutgames.com/find-the-right-game>
- <https://www.familygamingdatabase.com/home>



How to Remove Social Media Access After Granting It

Have you given your child access to social media but are now regretting that decision? Bark have published this article to help you take back control by removing social media:

<https://www.bark.us/blog/removing-social-media/>

WhatsApp

Users should be at least 13 years old to use

WhatsApp. We frequently receive reports of children not using WhatsApp appropriately, such as sharing images to embarrass others, sending hurtful messages, spreading rumours, or excluding people from group chats to make them feel left out.



Since WhatsApp lacks parental controls, it is important to think about whether it is really the right platform for your child. For example, you should consider if your child has the critical thinking skills to recognise bullying. Furthermore, do they understand how to manage peer pressure and refrain from joining in on harmful behaviour?

If your child is using WhatsApp, it is crucial to have regular conversations with them. Talk about who they are chatting with, encourage them to think carefully about the messages they send and how they might be perceived by others. Finally, make sure to model good digital behaviour yourself, as children often learn by observing the adults around them.

What should I be aware of if my child is using WhatsApp?

- **Group chats:** Everyone within a group, even if they are not one of your child's contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group chat. If your child is using WhatsApp, check their group privacy settings to see who can add them to groups. Ensure your child understands that they can leave a chat at any time, and they know how to report users. Find out more here:

<https://faq.whatsapp.com/424124173736394>

- **Inappropriate content:** users can be exposed to content that is not suitable for their age.
- **Location sharing:** talk to your child about when this would be appropriate to use and the potential danger of sharing their location.
- **Chat lock/secret code:** users can lock chats as well as apply a secret code setting so a chat does not appear in the main chat.
- **Blocking/Reporting:** Show your child how to block and report other users. Find out how here: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/1142481766359885/>

Further information

Internet Matters have produced a how to guide available here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/whatsapp-safety-a-how-to-guide-for-parents/>

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into.
Current as of the date released 01.11.24.