

3rd April 2014

To parents and Guardians of children in Nursery – Year 6

Dear Parents and Guardians

Developing Technology and 'Apps'

The speed in the development of information and communication technology means that, as parents and teachers, we can often find it hard to keep up with the latest trends, websites and apps that the pupils and those around them are using.

As you know we take very seriously our duty to educate the pupils to use these technologies sensibly, safely and to make the most of the advantages that they offer. However, on occasion, we feel it is important that we draw your attention to platforms we have come across that are being used which we consider will have a significantly negative impact.

Talking Angela

Of particular concern to us at the moment is an app called 'Talking Angela'.

Talking Angela is part of a wider series of apps called Talking Tom and Friends, which have been downloaded more than 1.5bn times since 2010, and are currently being used by 230m people every month – lots of children, but also lots of adults.

They've spawned a series of popular YouTube videos in partnership with Disney, as well as a range of physical toys.

In *Talking Angela*, players primarily interact with Angela, the cat, by asking and answering questions. Angela uses "chat bot" technology to converse with users. Questions are answered differently based on the age of the user and in-app settings. Players can also "pet" Angela, take quizzes, or turn on their device's front-facing camera and microphone to voice chat with the feline.

The cat encourages children to give personal details in a non-threatening way. I advise parents to read up on information on the internet before deciding whether this app is appropriate for your child or not, as there are a number of different opinions on its suitability.

The dangers this app poses:

We have become aware that some pupils in the School have this app and they are scaring each other about the eyes of the cat, because they think there is a man watching them inside the eyes. There is a lot of 'chat' about it on the internet, which children can read about and many of the comments are inappropriate and not suitable for children to read. There are also links to other apps and videos which also may be inappropriate. We will be addressing this in School by talking to the pupils about the threats to their safety that this type of app can pose but it will be very important for parents and families to also monitor and advise their children.

We advise all parents to be aware of the apps that their child has on his/her mobile devices and how they are being used. It is important that we are all frequently reinforcing messages about safe and responsible IT use and the potentially serious problems that inappropriate behaviour online can cause. It is also very important that we are teaching the pupils the importance of setting tight security on anything that they post on any social network site.

We very much want to work in collaboration with parents on this crucial element of the education of their children and would be very happy to talk with you about any specific concerns you may have.

Listed below are a few of the many websites that are available giving useful information and advice:

www.thinkyounow.co.uk

www.saferinternet.org.uk

www.knowthenet.org.uk

If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Mrs J. Shackel

Deputy Head