

2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017

To Parents and Guardians of children in Year 4

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, via SMART, 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 may have a negative impact.

In Year 4 at the moment an app called 'ooVoo' may potentially cause some issues.

Parents need to know that *ooVoo Video Call, Text and Voice* is a free app that teens can use to group video chat with up to 12 people, even if they're using different platforms (iPhone, Android, desktop computers, and more). *ooVoo* users also can send texts and make regular phone calls, including to international numbers (in-app purchase is required). Ads on the free version can be removed by purchasing *ooVoo's* premium service. The developer's terms indicate people must be 13 or older to use the app. An important privacy and safety note: Unless teens change their account settings to limit or restrict public access, anyone can search for, see, and contact them.

We have found that a number of pupils in the Year 4 classes have formed a group where they can WhatsApp, each other or Facetime each other and they are learning the pitfalls about accidentally sending a message to the whole group rather than an individual. Some of the conversations they have had have been of a personal nature and have caused upset to individuals.

Aside from the annual SMART lessons, we have also addressed these issues in School by having a Circle Time and talking to the pupils about how they speak to each other, and about each other.

As many of the children have mobile devices where they can download apps quite easily we would appreciate it if parents and families could also monitor their child's devices and check what apps they are using and their privacy/control settings. It would be particularly useful if parents could apply controls to limit the people assigned to group chats, restricting these to just family members at this age. 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:

<https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT201304> (guidance for Apple controls)

[www.thinkyouknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkyouknow.co.uk)

[www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)

[www.knowthenet.org.uk](http://www.knowthenet.org.uk)

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

Yours sincerely



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