

26th May 2017

Dear Parents

I would like to draw your attention to some apps that the children may be using. The Education Safeguarding Team has received notification of two apps that have been highlighted as a concern by Surrey Police.

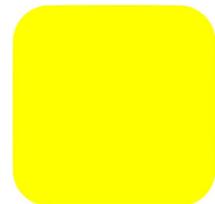
Monkey

The first is called 'Monkey'. Users are connected at random to engage in a 10 second live video chat. They can add more time or add the person to Snapchat to continue the connection. The content of the videos can be explicit or abusive and children and young people are vulnerable to exploitation through the opportunity for private chat with people they don't know.



Yellow

The second of the two apps is called Yellow. It is marketed as the app to make new friends and chat with them! It's so fun! It is actually a dating app (otherwise known as Teenage Tinder) which contains a section for 13-17 year olds but there is no age verification check, which means it is easy for adults to pose as children with the potential for grooming. Users who both 'like' each other can add each other on Snapchat allowing unregulated chat and imagery sharing. The NSPCC have published its own concerns about the app.



Instagram

Although Instagram is only meant to be used by children that are 13+ yrs old, it is apparent that some are using this app at the Prep School. We are aware that there have been some issues locally which have caused concern for some parents and children. If your child is using Instagram, please can you ensure that their account is private, otherwise anybody can follow them and make contact with them. It is also wise to check that they have the 'add location' feature set to off, otherwise when posting photos they will alert the public to where they are at that moment. There is a lot of useful information in the document attached to this email - 'A Parents' Guide to Instagram'.



The following app is becoming very popular, however it appears to have many safeguarding features that will protect children.

Lego Life

Lego, is central to most childhoods and has certainly stood the test of time. Now Lego has embraced social networking, with the launch of the Lego Life app. The app has been developed for Android and iOS, to offer children the chance to freely express themselves and share ideas in a friendly environment, but what do parents need to know about the app to ensure that their child stays safe while using it?



This Lego Life app enables children to post images of their Lego creations and comment on others' creations. It is aimed at children under 13 years old. There are strict restrictions too on what comments can be made via the app. Text comments aren't allowed but users can choose from prewritten comments to post or Lego emojis and stickers. The developers of the app have joined forces with a content moderation company to bring algorithmic detection to the platform to ensure every uploaded image stays faceless, and strictly Lego related. Instead of images to identify users, Lego avatars will be used. Another way that children using the app will be kept safe is that users won't be asked for any personal information and there will be no tracking enabled in the app, so the location of a user will not be identified. However, even with those things in place it is always a good idea to continue to have regular conversations with your child about staying safe online.

Given the appeal of Lego amongst young children, it is highly likely that the Lego Life app will be used by children at quite a young age. If your child does start to use the app, remind them of the importance of treating people the same way they would when they are online, as they do when they are offline. For instance, being kind in the emojis they choose to comment on what others have shared. The 'Shirt Rule' has proved to be an effective way of making children think twice before they post something online. Encourage children that before posting anything online they should think: "Would I put this post or photo on my t-shirt so everybody can see it?" Remind your child that the online world is much bigger than they imagine and everything they post will be there for everybody to see and cannot be easily deleted. Also, let your child know that it is ok for them to talk to you about what they experience when using this app or indeed any other, without fear of there being a negative consequence for them. Keeping the lines of communication open and having regular conversations about e-safety will help to make sure your child is well equipped to enjoy themselves and stay safe online.

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.thinkuknow.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
Head of Prep School