

28th February 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

Current E-Safety Issues in the Media

You may well have seen in the news and on social media, about the current issues centred on content viewed within **YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTubeKids**.

The purpose of this letter is not to worry you, but to raise your own awareness of these issues so that you can ensure that your children are protected whilst online at home.

The first is called Momo. This 'Momo challenge' has been around on the internet for a few years. However, more recently it has made its way on to sites used by children. Momo is a scary looking person/doll who sends graphic, violent images and asks users to participate in dangerous challenges. The current trend is for these challenges to appear in the middle of videos that the children may be watching such as: Minecraft videos or popular YouTuber channels. Whilst social media platforms are trying to take these videos down, the images are still slipping through the net. Parent Zone have released a 3 minute video for you to watch, which provides you with further information about the 'Momo challenge'. <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/three-minute-briefing-momo-challenge>.

The other issue surrounds Peppa Pig. There have been videos on YouTube of Peppa Pig self-harming and carrying out violent acts. These tend to happen in the first few minutes of the episodes. YouTube again are taking down videos as and when they're made aware of them.

Snapchat

It has also been brought to our attention by parents that some children are using the social media platform Snapchat. Snapchat is one of the most popular social media apps for teens, but anyone younger than 13 years of age should not be using the app. Not only is this a violation of Snapchat's policies, but the app also isn't suitable for younger users. The minimum age is 13, in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). However, when you download it, Snapchat asks for your date of birth, and - if your birth year tells it you're under 13—you are redirected to the child version, called "SnapKidz." For further information about Snapchat there are many websites, however this link may be useful. <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/snapchat/>

I would like to draw your attention to a tab on our website: Information/Safeguarding/Advice for parents and pupils. In this area we have added links to a number of useful websites which give advice and we have also uploaded letters that we have sent out to parents in the past couple of years which focus on specific apps which have been of concern.

Current advice from www.thinkyouknow.co.uk is that you should talk with your children about staying safe online. In particular reminding them that if they come across anything that they find upsetting or that they think that they shouldn't be watching to tell an adult. They also advise parents to always be present when children are accessing any source of social media. This will allow you to not only know what the children are viewing, but also gain further insight into the activities your children may be taking part in whilst online. They also suggest that you regularly review the device settings and parental controls on all your electronic devices. Finally, they advise you that if you become aware of or see inappropriate content on any of these platforms that you block and report them to the provider e.g. YouTube. Alternatively, you can contact CEOP <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> to share your concerns.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Shackel', written in a cursive style.

Mrs J. Shackel
Head of Prep School