

Annfield Plain Junior School
November 2015

Dear Parent/Carer,

This week we have been studying ways in which to stay safe. During discussions, it has been drawn to our attention that many children are using a variety of social media sites. Whilst many are used positively there are risks attached to their use. Many of these sites have age restrictions of 13 years+, but it appears that a lot of children are still using these sites, many having little understanding of privacy settings. It is the current trend that children compete to have the most friends and likes; however the more friends, the less privacy and the higher the risk. Many pupils are also using their real names.

Many of the children did not consider the implications of some of these sites, even though regular work is undertaken in school to help them understand the risks and we are sure this also is the message you give them at home. We have spoken about the dangers of posting photographs online, especially if they are wearing school uniform. We have also discussed how photographs which “disappear” after a few seconds can be screen shot and shared across the world-wide web or around friends.

We have followed this up by talking to teenagers about the dangers of the most popular media sites and would like to share this with you. You may be aware of some of these but there are others which you may be unfamiliar with. These include:

- **Facebook**- as most people do not use privacy settings you can access other people's videos which often contain inappropriate content;
- **Twitter** –if the wrong people are followed there is a lot of vulgar content;
- **Instagram** – posting of photos and teenagers compete for more likes but the more likes, the less private the account is. Many young people post photos in their school uniforms. It has been known for photos to be copied and then used to set up fake accounts;
- **Snapchat** – photos sent to each other for a few seconds and then disappears; often used by teenagers for pictures of their day, food etc. but also nude snapshots which have then been screenshot and shared with others;
- **Vine** – 7 second videos. Many have very offensive content including racist material, sexual content and usually very inappropriate for children. Both Vine and Twitter can be used to watch/follow innocent items but then sexual content can pop up and becomes accessible;
- **Ask.fm**- This is a particularly nasty site, where people can post insults about one another anonymously;
- **WhatsApp** (Messenger and photos);
- **ooVoo** (Videochat, like Skype, for multiple people);
- **Tumblr** (blogs, photos, post-its);
- **Burn Note** (messaging);
- **Whisper**;
- **Kik Messenger** ;
- **Yik Yak** (sharing stories with strangers);
- **Tinder** (dating / meeting people);
- **MeetMe**.

Many children have also spoken about playing computer games. It is not recommended that children under the age of 18 play these games because they contain a strong, violent content. Research has shown that regular access to this when under the age of 18 can de-sensitise children to violence so that they think it is normal. Games mentioned have included: Call Of Duty, FarCry4, Grand Theft Auto, Assassin's Creed. Other issues which have been discussed are that when playing on x-box live pupils are playing with strangers who often use inappropriate language and sexual conversations.

We hope that this information is helpful and have included a very useful leaflet from childnet on how to support your children, both of primary and secondary age, to stay safe on-line. The websites included in the information are also very useful sites.