



## **ST.THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

25/09/2023

Dear parents/carers

### **Online safety**

The online world is an essential part of our daily lives and learning how to use technology safely is an essential skill for young people. Apps such as TikTok and Whatsapp, for example, are extremely popular but risks are posed and it is important that we work together to take an active role in teaching children about online dangers. Learning how to act safely when using the internet is an incredibly important part of safeguarding our children and your role as a parent/carer can make a significant difference.

Children can accidentally or deliberately be exposed to unwanted or unpleasant content or comments online. Due to recent inappropriate use of social media sites; we feel it is our responsibility to draw attention to this rising concern.

Recent issues that have been brought to our attention involve the use of: WhatsApp – an instant messaging app for smartphones. The user agreement requires users to be **age 16 or older**.

The reported incidents of misuse of social media sites happen at home, after school hours, when children have access to web sites that are blocked in school. With this in mind, and in response to concerned parents, we feel it important to point out to parents the risks of unregulated use of such sites. This will allow you to make informed decisions as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not and when and how to monitor their use, particularly at night time.

We strongly advise a device free bedroom policy after bedtime to allow for uninterrupted sleep and rest. We are very aware the use of social media occurs outside of school but any negative repercussions often impact the wellbeing of children and learning time in school.

We value your support in this matter and we will endeavour to promote online safety through lessons, assemblies and guest speakers to provide children with an awareness and knowledge so they can respond appropriately to any dangerous, bullying or unlawful cyber behaviour.



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### **Popular apps and age ratings**

WhatsApp	<b>Age rating: 16+</b> <b>Main features:</b> text, photo & video sharing, one to one and group chats, disappearing messages. End to end encrypted. Live location sharing.
Snapchat	<b>Age rating: 13+</b> <b>Main features:</b> photos, short videos or messages, disappearing messages called Snaps.
Instagram	<b>Age rating: 13+</b> <b>Main features:</b> photo & video sharing, livestreaming, stories, DMs, hashtags.
Wink	<b>Age rating: 13+</b> <b>Main features:</b> messaging, friends, photo sharing.
TikTok	<b>Age rating: 13+</b> <b>Main features:</b> photo & video sharing, livestreaming, stories

Attached to this letter is also a social media information leaflet for parents from 'Internet Matters'.

Please also see links below:

[Parents and Carers - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

[Keeping children safe online | NSPCC](#)

[Online Safety Leaflets & resources - Internet Matters](#)

If you have any concerns regarding online safety, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely