



Rushmere Hall Primary School
IPSWICH, SUFFOLK

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RE: Instagram / Facebook / Social Media use (Year 6 pupils)

Dear Parent / Carer,

It has come to our attention that some children in Years 5 and 6 have Instagram or Facebook profiles even though the permitted minimum age to use the site is 13, according to the sites terms and conditions.

Rushmere Hall Primary School is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the Internet and as such we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern. Websites such as Instagram or Facebook offer amazing communication and social connections, however they are created with their audience in mind and this is **specifically over 13 years old.**

Possible risks for children under 13 using the site may include:

- Instagram, Facebook and other Social media sites use **“age targeted”** advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other inappropriate nature, depending on the age they stated they were when they registered
- Children may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on Instagram or Facebook is not moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children
- Photographs shared by users are not moderated and therefore children could be exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options
- Instagram or Facebook could be exploited by bullies and for other inappropriate contact
- **Children can be implicated in serious, inappropriate use of these sites by being added to groups by others or by requesting to join groups**
- Instagram or Facebook cannot and does not verify its members therefore it is important to remember that if your child can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else!

We feel it is important to point out to parents the risks of underage use of such sites, so you can make **an informed decision** as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not. These profiles will have been created away from school.

As a school we will take action (such as reporting under aged profiles directly to Instagram, facebook or other sites or CEOP) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our children. Children reported to us, who are using this inappropriately, will have any internet access they have in school removed.

Should you decide to allow your child to have an Instagram or Facebook profile (despite the permitted minimum age being set at 13) we strongly advise you to:

- **Remind your child that inappropriate use of these sites can easily be evidenced (by taking a screen shot) and that once something has been written the evidence trail remains, regardless of whether the child tries to delete the account or the app.**
 - **Remind your child that evidence collected by the school from other sources will be shared with the parents of the child who are using the internet inappropriately.**
 - Check their profile is set to private and that only friends can see information that is posted
 - Monitor your child's use and talk to them about safe and appropriate online behaviour such as not sharing personal information and not posting offensive messages or photos
 - Ensure that your child does not have access to devices after particular times (some conversations we have been made aware of are occurring at 11pm or 6am in the morning). Do this by switching off wi-fi at night.
 - Ask them to install the CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) application from <https://www.ceop.police.uk/> on their profile. This places a bookmark on their profile to CEOP and the Report Abuse button which has been known to deter offenders
 - Have a look at the advice for parents/carers from Instagram etc using the online safety page of the school website
 - Set up your own profile so you understand how the site works and ask them to have you as a friend on their profile so you know what they are posting online
- Make sure your child understands the following rules:
 - ⇒ Always keep your profile private
 - ⇒ Never accept friends you don't know in real life
 - ⇒ Never post anything which could reveal your identity
 - ⇒ **Never post anything you wouldn't want your parents to see**
 - ⇒ Never agree to meet somebody you only know online without telling a trusted adult
 - ⇒ Always tell someone if you feel threatened or someone upsets you

We'd recommend that all parents visit the CEOP Think U Know website for more information on keeping your child safe online www.thinkuknow.co.uk. If you would like any further information please don't hesitate to contact Mr Al-Aride (E Safety Lead) or Mrs Hobbin (Designated Safeguarding Lead).

As a school, we will continue to reinforce the messages about and continue to educate children about the benefits and dangers of social media by specifically focused lessons in Year 6 but also through our assemblies and via our website.

It is our wish that the children in our school are safe and secure at **all times**. However, we cannot police what happens outside school nor can we be held accountable for incidents that occur outside the school. Therefore, we need to ensure that you are aware of this situation and take action if necessary. We would like it known that any breach of the Acceptable Use Terms and Conditions of these sites will not be tolerated and may be reported to the police.

Mr Stock

Head teacher