

Simonside Primary School

Bedeburn Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 4LG

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Headteacher: Mrs Hills

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to you today because school staff have noticed an increasing number of concerns related to mobile phone use, messaging apps and online communication among primary-aged children outside of school. As you will know, we live in an increasingly complex digital world, and technology can often play a central role in how young people connect, learn and socialise. While this can bring benefits, it also presents challenges—particularly for children who are not yet emotionally equipped to navigate online spaces safely.

We want to remind families of the minimum age requirements for several popular apps that children are frequently using:

- **WhatsApp** has a minimum age of **13** in the UK. This age requirement was updated in April 2024 to bring it in line with international standards.
- **Snapchat** also requires users to be at least **13** years old.
- **TikTok** users must be **13 or older** to hold an account, as part of its age-gate and safety measures for young people.

Despite these age limits, we are aware that many of our pupils have access to these platforms. We know that some children sign up using an older date of birth, often without understanding the possible risks—such as exposure to inappropriate content, pressure from group chats, or contact from people they do not know.

At school, we continue to promote safe and responsible online behaviour through our curriculum. Children take part in **online safety lessons, assemblies**, and our **dedicated Online Safety Weeks**, where we teach them how to stay safe, make good choices and speak up if something online makes them worried or uncomfortable.

However, we also recognise that children's online activity is changing rapidly, and these issues increasingly affect school life—particularly when distressing content, unkind messages or friendship difficulties originate from out-of-school online communication. We therefore ask for the support of parents and carers in closely monitoring your child's online behaviours. Our advice is that primary-aged children do not access social media and that online activity is restricted by the use of parental controls. For additional support the following website has some great tips: <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/social-media/>

To support families further, we will be seeking **additional guidance and advice** from external online-safety partners and local safeguarding networks. In the meantime, if you have any further concerns or questions please speak to your child's teacher.

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Thank you, as always, for your continued support. Working together—school and home—we can help ensure that our children grow up using technology in a safe, healthy and positive way.

If you have any concerns or questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Warm regards,

Mrs Carter

Deputy Head Teacher