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Dear Parent/Carer,



### **Social Media and keeping your child safe: E-safety - key information for parents/carers**

It has been brought to our attention that some of our children have Facebook, Instagram, and other social media profiles even though the permitted minimum age to use these sites is **13 years old**, according to their terms and conditions.

Avalon School is committed to keeping our children safe and to promoting the safe, responsible use of the Internet. As such, we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern.

#### **1) Individual profile problems**

We have discovered that many of the children's social media profiles:

- are not properly secured with poor privacy settings that mean anyone in the world can see their profile;
- have pictures of them (and other children) in their school uniform, which makes them easily identifiable and means people can work out where they will be in real life;
- have content which is wholly inappropriate in terms of the language and/or images on them. (And even if *your* child's profile is appropriate, being 'friends' with someone who has such a profile means *your* child can see it).

#### **2) General social networking issues**

Websites such as 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:

- Facebook 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 or dangerous contact or behaviour.



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- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on Facebook and several other apps are 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 identifies private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options.
- Facebook could be exploited by bullies and for other inappropriate contact. Facebook cannot and does not verify its members; therefore, it is important to remember that if your child can lie about their age and who they are online, so can anyone else!

### 3) Parental responsibility

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 at the moment.

Should you decide to allow your child of any age to have a Facebook profile we strongly advise you to:

- 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
- Install the CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) application from [www.facebook.com/clickceop](http://www.facebook.com/clickceop) 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 Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/safety/groups/parents/>
- 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 basic E-safety rules that we have learnt about at school.
  - Always keep your profile as private as possible.
  - If possible, don't put in your full name, e.g. *Bart S*, instead of *Bart Simpson*
  - Never accept friends you don't know in real life
  - Never post anything – writing or images – 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 also recommend that all parents visit the CEOP Think U Know website for more information on





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keeping your child safe online [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) as well as the NSPCC Net aware website, which we referred to in our recent Parents' E Safety workshop. This has links to information about apps, the minimum age and points out concerns from children and parents.  
<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

Many children now tell us that they spend a great deal of time on You Tube. Parents can consider YouTube Kids as a safer option for younger children. YouTube Kids allows parents to set an age level and time limits.

YouTube allows you to watch, create and comment on videos. You can create your own YouTube account, create a music playlist, and even create your own channel, which means you will have a public profile. YouTube allows live streaming. It is therefore so important that parents know exactly what their child is engaging with on YouTube. According to YouTube itself, the minimum intended age for content is 13 years.

An **O2 NSPCC Online Safety Helpline** can help you to set up parental controls, adjust privacy settings or get advice on social networks. You can also call free on **0808 800 5002** for further advice.

#### 4) School support and action

Avalon takes e-safety very seriously, and we discuss E-Safety issues on a regular basis throughout the year with our pupils.

We will also be holding another Internet Safety week, in the week commencing 11<sup>th</sup> June, where further focus, including during other subjects such as PSHCEE, will be arranged to highlight the risks and provide further support sessions to children on how to stay safe online.

If you feel that you, or your child, needs further support in keeping your child safe on the internet, please make an appointment to see Mrs Ellsmoor, Computing and E Safety Co-ordinator or Mrs Callaway, Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Because of our duty to all the children in our school, we will take action (which may involve the police) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our pupils.

With thanks for your continued support,

Mrs J Callaway  
Headteacher