

Northwick Park Primary and Nursery Academy

Company No. 9154404

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Dear Parents,

Re: Internet safety and the use of Social Media

Northwick Park Primary and Nursery Academy 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 growing concern, due to the increase in inappropriate use of OoVoo, Skype, Instagram, Facebook and other texting sites. Many of the issues that have been brought to our attention recently have involved the use of:

- OoVoo which is a video messaging app, it allows video chats of up to 12 people at one time. **You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**
- Skype – a video and messaging app. **You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**
- Instagram – an online mobile photo sharing, video sharing and social networking service which enables its users to take pictures and videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms. **You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**
- Facebook – a social networking site. **You are required to be at least 13 years old before you can create an account.**
- Whats App – An instant messaging app for smartphones. **The use agreement requires users to be age 16 or older.**

Children are often creating ‘groups’ to which others are joining. This means that all information is share with anyone who is in the group so privacy is lost and in some cases strangers have been added to the group.

We understand that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the ways our children are using new and very changing technologies. Our children are immersed in a society that has become dependent on powerful computers, including smart phones, iPads, interactive online games and virtual communities.

Websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Skype, Whats App, Viber and OoVoo, to name but a few, offer fantastic opportunities for communication and social connections, however they are created with their audience in mind especially sites such as Facebook and Instagram which are specially for those over 13 years old. When monitoring your son/daughter’s internet use, please remind yourself of the concerns of social media:

- Many sites use ‘targeted’ advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other appropriate nature to the site, depending on the age they stated when they registered. They may have lied about their age to get an account, making them appear older than they are, increasing this risk.
- Young people may accept friend requests from people they don’t know in real life which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour. The general rule is, if they aren’t friends in real life, they shouldn’t be ‘friends’ online.
- Language, games, groups and content posed or share on social media is **NOT** moderated and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for young people.
- Photographs shared by users are **NOT** moderated and therefore young people 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.
- Social media sites can be exploited by bullies and for inappropriate contact.
- Social media sites cannot and do not verify its members, therefore, it is important to remember that if your son/daughter can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else.