

Thursday 25th January 2024

Online incidents

Dear Parents and Carers,

In the past few weeks, we have noticed a worrying rise in online incidents with our year 6 children. This has involved a range of online media including TikTok, WhatsApp, online gaming, YouTube and FaceTime, with the incidents being most common in children who have their own phones.

While we understand that children of this age might be given phones and more independent access to the internet, we regularly see that they are not yet mature enough to use them with complete independence. They are also unaware of the impact that some of their online choices will have on themselves and others. As a result, they need help and guidance from both home and school.

At school, we have regular online safety lessons where we teach children how to use the internet safely; however, for some children we can see that our messages have not got through yet. In addition to what we already teach, we will now be introducing further online safety lessons to tackle some of the specific behaviours we are seeing; we will explore the emotional impact the incidents and the subsequent sharing of incidents are having; learn about who the potential audience is for the behaviours they are showing online; as well as giving more advice on what further strategies children need in place to manage behaviours online.

How can you support at home?

We know that most of you do this already, but we ask that you as their parents, support the learning we have in school and please take the necessary actions and precautions to ensure that your child is learning to use their devices and the internet in a safe capacity. Even if you believe you have taken all the necessary precautions, please take the time to double check this and go through the steps outline below again.

Please consider the following actions:

- Think carefully about what your child is allowed to access on the internet and what they are allowed to do.
- Have regular discussions with your child about what they and their peers are doing on the internet.
- Regularly monitor your child's internet use to help support their behaviour.
- Please do not threaten to remove or ban phones or access to devices as this tends to encourage children to keep their behaviours secret. Instead, work to foster an open dialogue with them, where you can discuss worries and behaviours together.

The majority of the incidents that we see, happen because the child does not think that their parent will be checking their phone. They are also unaware that the recipients of their messages will be sharing them

Headteacher: Miss S McGann Deputy Headteacher: Miss K Whiting

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with their own trusted adults and usually school. We have also had recent incidents where adults have been unaware that their child has certain social media accounts.

If your child uses TikTok (rated 13+) or WhatsApp (rated 16+), please take the time to read the attached parent guides from National Online Safety. If you wish to find out information about other platforms, games or sites, please view our school's online safety page that contains links to other guides and informative websites.

<https://www.connaughtjuniorschool.co.uk/page/?title=Online+Safety&pid=37>

In addition to this, we are also seeing a spread of children becoming 'boyfriends and girlfriends'. Unfortunately, for some, this is leading to fallings out and, in the worst cases, acts of severe unkindness, both face-to-face and online. It is also acting as a distraction from learning in what is a very important final year at Connaught.

Class teachers are encouraging children to not engage with this until they are old enough to understand the emotions involved and we would urge you to also take a keen interest if your child reports that they have a boyfriend or girlfriend. It is inevitable that they will reach this stage, but we must help them navigate it and deal with the emotions that it will bring.

If you have any questions about online safety and supporting your child online, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind Regards,
Mr Stevens

Headteacher: Miss S McGann

Deputy Headteacher: Miss K Whiting

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