



Safeguarding Update July 2023



Inappropriate use of online platforms – Snapchat

Snapchat is an app for sending photos and videos (known as 'Snaps') and text messages. The 'Stories' feature lets users share photos or videos with all their contacts at once. Snaps disappear after being opened, usually within seconds. Stories disappear after 24 hours. Images and messages aren't automatically saved on phones. The **minimum age** to use Snapchat is **13** but it's easy to sign up if you're younger.

What are the problems?

- 1) Sending, receiving or being exposed to inappropriate content e.g. racial or derogatory images or videos, sexual content includes nudes and semi nudes and cyber bullying.
- 2) Child's location could be shared automatically with their contacts, which could put them in danger if they have strangers as 'friends' on the app. A new 'Meet Up' feature allows people to get directions to another user's location, if they're sharing their location.
- 3) There's a risk of children being 'groomed' by strangers into sharing pictures and information about themselves. Gangs also use apps to groom and recruit children.

Tackling the problems

Talk to your child about image sharing and being careful about what they share. Even though images disappear in Snapchat, they can be screenshotted and then shared – outside of the original sender's control. So, remind your child to think carefully about the images they share, and with whom. Before they share anything, tell them to ask: "Would I be happy for other people to see this?"

- 1) As users of the internet, we all have a part to play in reporting any inappropriate or harmful behaviour online, including **any racist comments, images or accounts**. 80% of teens have seen online hate aimed at a particular group in the past year, so it is key that all of us know how to report and are able to help young people in doing so. Each platform has its own mechanism for doing this, here is the direct link for snapchat help.snapchat.com Any content on social media that would cause harm should also be reported as hate speech either at <https://reportharmfulcontent.com/report/> or directly to the police. At The Emmbrook School these behaviours and actions are not acceptable and appropriate actions will be implemented to address this.
- 2) Make sure your child knows the risks of **taking, sharing or viewing naked or sexually explicit pictures of themselves or another child, either voluntarily or if asked to by someone else**. This is known as 'sharing nudes and semi-nudes' or 'sexting' and is **illegal**, even when the person doing it is a child. It can also be distressing for a child to have their image shared more widely, or to see an inappropriate image that someone else has shared.
- 3) Tell your child to only use it with real friends Anyone could pretend to be a child or teenager online, so encourage your child not to talk to people they don't know in real life. Encourage them not to share information, such as which school they go to or where they live, with people they don't know offline.
- 4) Use privacy settings. By default, only 'friends' your child has added on Snapchat can contact them directly and see their story or location, so encourage your child to keep those default settings. To check and change the settings: Tap the person icon in the top-left of Snapchat, then the cog in the top-right. Scroll down to the 'Privacy Control' section and tap the relevant options (e.g. 'Contact Me' and 'View My Story') under 'See My Location', enable 'Ghost Map' to turn location sharing off. Under 'See Me In Quick Add' you can stop your child's profile from being suggested to strangers as a potential 'friend'.
- 5) If you think your child is being targeted by a gang, share your concerns with our school immediately. You can also contact the NSPCC for advice – call 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk. Be alert to changes in your child – such as having new unexplained possessions, changing friendship groups, behaviour and mood changes, or unexplained injuries.

Summer Break

We are quickly approaching the Summer break, which is an extended period of time away from school. If you have any worries or concerns about your child or need any support or guidance during this time please utilise the following:

The School Safeguarding email will be checked throughout the holiday but may not be able to provide an immediate response:

safeguarding@wokingham.sch.uk

Alternatively, you can reach out to any of the following organisations:

Wokingham Children's Services: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/children-and-families/child-protection-and-family-support/report-a-concern-about-a-child/> or in an **Emergency**, 999

Alternatively, the following will be able to provide further support and guidance:

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000 – if you are worried about a young person.

Young Minds Crisis Messenger: Text YM to 85258 – if you are a young person feeling in crisis.

Childline: 0800 1111 – if you are a young person and have no-one to talk to.

We hope you have a lovely Summer!