



Achieving  
Excellence  
Together

CARRICK KNOWE PRIMARY SCHOOL  
LAMPACRE ROAD  
EDINBURGH  
EH12 7HU

Tel: 0131 334 4505

www.carrickknoweprimary.com

Email: headteacher@carrickknowe.edin.sch.uk

Gail Canning

Head Teacher



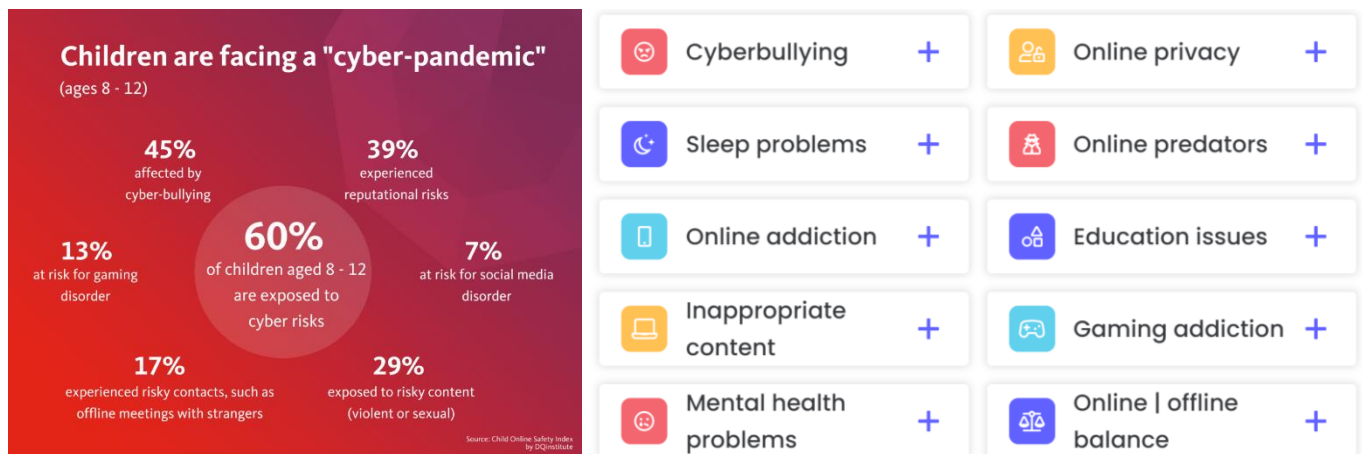
9<sup>th</sup> March 2023

"I have 100s of followers on my account."  
"People ask me 'for pics' all the time."  
"People are always swearing and arguing in our group chat."  
"I share my photos publicly so that I get more likes."  
"I see inappropriate stuff all the time."

Dear Parents/Carers,

We were delighted to be awarded our Digital Schools Award at the start of the year which recognised the creative ways we are using technology across the school. However, the quotes above from our children during Digital Safety Week has highlighted a growing need to be doing more when it comes to keeping children safe online.

We have a number of concerns about children using apps and being exposed to content which is designed for adults. Unfortunately, this is leading to very concerning and dangerous situations where unknown adults are contacting children online.



A recent survey showed that 78% of children receive friend requests in an online game from people they don't know and nearly half have received requests to meet up with strangers in person.

1 in 10 children have seen pornographic images by the age of 9 and this rises to 5 in 10 children by the ages of 11-13.

**These stats are not being shared for dramatic effect - but to make you aware of the very real issues facing children across the UK - not just at Carrick Knowe.**



As well as this, school staff are finding themselves dealing with DAILY incidents and fallouts which have come about following group chats the night before - particularly on WhatsApp.

This includes children using silly, hurtful and often completely unacceptable language towards each other - leaving many feeling targeted by others.

At Carrick Knowe, we will continue to talk with children about Digital Safety and we will be promoting the 'THINK' message (see image) when it comes to posting things online.



We ask for your support in this too because all of this *IS having an impact on behaviours, IS having an impact on relationships, and IS having an impact on learning and teaching.*

### What can I do?

1) Sit down with your child and speak to them about what they use their phone/tablet for and what they are accessing. Open conversations are key.

2) Despite most Social Media apps having a 13+ age limit (WhatsApp is 16), we recognise many of our children feel the pressure to create one. If they do have one, try and get them to be open with you about it, make sure you are able to monitor any chats and remove them from any groups which are becoming volatile.

3) Make sure all privacy settings on apps are set to private. Try and dispel this myth that 'getting likes and followers' is a good thing and instead spread the message that this is dangerous for young children. Explain that nothing they post online is ever guaranteed to remain private and they should always THINK before they hit send.

4) Ensure all parental controls are used. This is not to 'spy' on your children or because you cannot trust them but because the online world can be a dangerous place. Most devices allow you to:

- Block specific apps or websites
- See how much time has been spent on apps
- Set inappropriate content filters

For children with an android device, the [Google Family Link app](#) is free and has been recommended by a number of parents/carers at Carrick Knowe as well as school staff. As well as all of the features mentioned above, the app also has the benefit of having a location tracker.

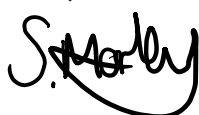
For children using an Apple device such as iPhone or iPad, there are features available for parents by going into the settings and using 'Family Sharing'. This links accounts together and allows you to manage exactly how a child's device is used including receiving notifications when they want to buy or download apps. Other useful features include 'Downtime' which will lock a device at certain times of the day and 'App Limits' which removes access once an app has been used for a specified length of time. More information about parental controls can be found here: <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT201304>

Our school website has a 'Digital Safety' page and on there you can find guides to the most popular social media apps and how to ensure your child is safe when using them - we've given an example of the WhatsApp one below. There are also guides on topics such as mental health, age-appropriate content and cyberbullying. We are happy to print any of these guides upon request.

<https://carrickknowprimary.com/digitalsafety/>

If you are needing any further support or advice on any of the issues in this letter, then feel free to get in touch. We also welcome any feedback as we continue to develop our Digital Safety curriculum across the school.

Many thanks,



Mr S Morley  
Acting Depute Head



**What Parents & Carers Need to Know about WHATSAPP**

WhatsApp is the world's most popular messaging service, with around two billion users exchanging texts, photos, videos and documents, as well as making voice and video calls. Its end-to-end encryption means messages can only be viewed by the sender and any recipients, not even WhatsApp can read them. Updates to its privacy policy in 2021 (involving sharing data with parent company Facebook) caused millions to leave the app, but the new policy was widely misinterpreted - it only related to WhatsApp's business features, not to personal messages.

**UK AND EUROPE 16+ BEST OF THE WORLD**

**WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**

**SCAMS**  
Fraudsters occasionally send WhatsApp messages pretending to offer prizes, encouraging the user to click on a link to win. Other common scams involve warning someone that their WhatsApp subscription has run out (aiming to dupe them into disclosing payment details) or impersonating a friend or relative and asking for money to be transferred to help with an emergency.

**DISAPPEARING MESSAGES**  
Users can set WhatsApp messages to disappear in 24 hours, 7 days or 90 days by default. Photos and videos can also be instructed to disappear after the recipient has viewed them. These files can't be saved or forwarded - so if your child was sent an inappropriate message, it would be difficult to prove any wrongdoing. However, the receiver can take a screenshot and save that as evidence.

**ENABLING FAKE NEWS**  
WhatsApp has unfortunately been linked to accelerating the spread of dangerous rumours. In India in 2018, some outbreaks of mob violence appear to have been sparked by false allegations being shared on the app. WhatsApp itself took steps to prevent its users circulating hazardous theories and speculation in the early weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**POTENTIAL CYBERBULLYING**  
Group chat and video calls are great for connecting with multiple people in WhatsApp, but there is always the potential for someone's feelings to be hurt by an unkind comment or joke. The 'only admin's' feature gives the admin(s) of a group control over who can send messages. They can, for example, block people from posting in a chat, which could make a child feel excluded and upset.

**CONTACT FROM STRANGERS**  
To start a WhatsApp chat, you only need the mobile number of the person you want to message (the other person also needs to have the app). WhatsApp can access the address book on someone's device and recognise which of their contacts also use the app. So if your child has ever given their phone number to someone they don't know, that person could use it to contact them via WhatsApp.

**LOCATION SHARING**  
The 'live location' feature lets users share their current whereabouts, allowing friends to see their movements. WhatsApp describes it as a 'simple and secure way to let people know where you are.' It is a useful method for a young person to let loved ones know they're safe - but if they used it in a chat with people they don't know, they would be exposing their location to them, too.

**Advice for Parents & Carers**

**CREATE A SAFE PROFILE**  
Even though someone would need a child's phone number to add them as a contact, it's also worth altering a young person's profile settings to restrict who can see their photo and status. The options are 'everyone', 'my contacts', and 'nobody' - choosing one of the latter two ensures that your child's profile is better protected.

**EXPLAIN ABOUT BLOCKING**  
If your child receives spam or offensive messages, calls or files from a contact, they should block them using 'settings' in the chat. Communication from a blocked contact won't show up on their device and stays undelivered. Blocking someone does not remove them from your child's contact list - so they also need to be deleted from the address book.

**REPORT POTENTIAL SCAMS**  
Young people shouldn't engage with any message that looks suspicious or too good to be true. When your child receives a message from an unknown number for the first time, they'll be given the option to report it as spam. If the sender claims to be a friend or relative, call that person on their usual number to verify it really is them, or if it's someone trying to trick your child.

**LEAVE A GROUP**  
If your child is in a group chat that is making them feel uncomfortable, or has been added to a group that they don't want to be part of, they can use WhatsApp's group settings to leave. If someone exits a group, the admin can add them back in once; if they leave a second time, it is permanent.

**THINK ABOUT LOCATION**  
If your child needs to use the 'live location' function to show you or one of their friends where they are, advise them to share their location only for as long as they need to. WhatsApp gives a range of 'live location' options, and your child should manually stop sharing their position as soon as it is no longer needed.

**DELETE ACCIDENTAL MESSAGES**  
If your child posts a message they want to delete, WhatsApp allows the user seven minutes to erase a message. Tap and hold on the message, choose 'delete' and then 'delete for everyone'. However, it's important to remember that recipients may have seen (and taken a screenshot of) a message before it was deleted.

**CHECK THE FACTS**  
You can now fact-check WhatsApp messages that have been forwarded at least five times, by double-tapping the magnifying glass icon to the right of the message. From there, your child can launch a Google search and decide for themselves whether the message was true or not.

**Meet Our Expert**  
Parveen Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks, a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.

**NOS National Online Safety**  
#WakeUpWednesday