



Coagh Primary School

31 Urbal Road, Coagh, Cookstown, BT80 0DW

www.coaghprimaryschool.com

Telephone: 02886737676

Principal: Mr I Bayne B.Ed.(Hons)

Fax: 02886736544

E-mail: ibayne452@c2kni.net

7th September 2020

WhatsApp/Snap Chat/Instagram and Online Messaging/Networking/File Sharing Sites/Apps

It has been brought to the attention of the school that a large number of pupils in Key Stage Two are involved in the use of messaging/networking/file sharing apps either through their smartphone, tablet or gaming console. Some of the content of the messages/files sent/received are of concern to the parents and subsequently to school because of the safeguarding/child protection role taken by Coagh Primary School.

Coagh Primary School would like to state that we believe the use of online messaging/networking and file sharing services/apps if used in the correct context is a highly valuable service but like many 'modern/online' services/apps it is open to misuse. The policy of Coagh Primary School is that no pupil should be using a mobile phone in school and that the filtering system provided by C2k 'blocks' pupils from using messaging services on computers/tablets in school.

Even though the use of messaging/networking/file sharing apps is happening outside school it does have an impact on the School. Coagh Primary School takes its role in terms of Safeguarding and Child Protection extremely seriously. Upset caused to pupils at home is inevitability transferred to school and this has an impact on friendships and relationships in a class/school context.

As part of the school's policy on online safety and having consulted with PSNI it is believed that the best approach for keeping children safe online is for parents to be completely open with their children and to help educate them in the appropriate use of ever evolving technology. Below are a few pieces of information that may be of use to yourself and your child.

- ❖ Snapchat has a minimum age requirement of 13 years old.
- ❖ Instagram requires users to be at least 13 years of age.
- ❖ TikTok also states that to sign up for its service you need to be 13 years old+
- ❖ WhatsApp's guidelines state no child under the age of 16 should be downloading or using its app.

Please speak to your child and encourage them to please use a common sense approach. Think of the online line conversation as if it was happening in the 'real world' and if someone walked away from the conversation then they are unlikely to want to return. Just because something is said online does not make it any less hurtful/offensive.

The general advice is that if you wouldn't say or do it in a 'face to face' conversation then it probably shouldn't be said or shared in any forum online.

Remember that anything written or shared online is never fully deleted.

The PSNI encourage parents to have open conversations with their children and to routinely monitor your child's phone, internet and gaming messages. By regularly checking your primary school child's messages you are able to help educate your child in the correct way to use them and provide them with the advice needed if something is inappropriate.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre also have an 'advice, help and report' section on their site.

The NSPCC gives these top tips:

- Talk about what might be OK for children of different ages. Ask your child what sites or apps they like. Write a list, and look at them together.
- Be positive about what you see, but also be open about concerns you have: "I think this site's really good" or "I'm a little worried about things I've seen here".
- Talk to your child about what you think is appropriate – but also involve them in the conversation. Ask what they think is OK for children of different ages – they'll feel involved in the decision-making.
- Be aware that your child might talk about friends who use apps or visit sites that you've decided aren't suitable. Be ready to discuss your reasons, but recognise that they may not agree with you. Listen carefully for the reasons why.

If you have any concerns, please contact a member of our Safeguarding Team. We thank you for your continued support and partnership with regard to pupil welfare.

Yours sincerely,



Mr I. Bayne