



**Wildmoor Heath School**  
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18<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

Dear Year 5 Parents/Carers,

### **Re: WhatsApp**

We have been made aware of multiple incidents happening at home whilst the children are using WhatsApp. These incidents are affecting the children's behaviour and learning at school.

We would like to remind you that WhatsApp's terms and conditions for the UK state, "You must be at least 13 years old to register for and use our Services." In addition, the NSPCC rate WhatsApp as 16+ (see <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/2023-01-12-is-whatsapp-safe-for-my-child/>). We wanted to ensure parents/carers are aware that that children accessing apps that are not age appropriate is a safeguarding concern.

If you do choose to allow your child to use WhatsApp, we recommend you monitor their device, ask questions and check their activity on a regular basis. You may also wish to ensure there are parental controls in place which limit when the app can be used. If your child is being upset by what they are seeing on WhatsApp, you should consider removing them from the specific group or blocking those who are upsetting them. We understand the children may not want you to do this, but this may be in their best interests.

The safe use of social media forms part of the Online Safety Curriculum at school and we have spent time with the children addressing these issues. Despite this, the children are continuing to report to us that they are experiencing unpleasant and unkind language via the WhatsApp groups. As this is happening at home, we would very much value your support. As adults, it is our responsibility to make clear what is and is not acceptable behaviour online. We encourage and recommend that children understand that having online access requires trust and clear boundaries – for their wellbeing and for their own safety. We fully appreciate that these decisions are parental choice but we wanted to make you aware that the WhatsApp groups are having a negative impact in the classroom and distracting the children from the important learning taking place. We recognise how much our parental community values both our academic aspirations and nurture for our pupils, so we hope we can garner your support to ensure the children are using age-appropriate apps sensibly.

In the next few days, we will be sending home a letter to get your permission if you want to allow your children to walk to and from school on their own and to bring a mobile phone for safety. The phones should be turned off when on the school premises and phones will be collected in at the beginning of the day and given out at the end of the day.

If you would like any further guidance regarding online safety, it can be found on the school website: <https://www.wildmoorheath.org.uk/page/?title=Online+Safety&pid=58>

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Kind regards,

*Mrs Vincent*