



St Monica's Catholic Primary School

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Wednesday, 22nd January 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

RE: Year 5 and Online Bullying

I was made aware this week of an inappropriate social media group involving a group of Year 5 pupils. I strongly encourage all parents to monitor all social media platforms, not just mobile phones but also console platforms, such as PlayStation and Xbox on a consistent basis.

Social media apps have age ratings for a reason. WhatsApp and Snapchat are intended for children aged 13 and over. Year 5 children are not yet ready for the responsibility or the consequences of their online actions.

We are increasingly seeing the wellbeing of pupils being affected by time spent online, both on social media and through extended gaming sessions. We want to work in partnership with you and ensure we put our children's safety first.

What we do here at St Monica's:

- I will personally address all instances of online misbehaviour and want parents and carers to feel comfortable to come and see me for support in any instance.
- We have a strong online safety curriculum embedded throughout the school.
- This year, we invited Merseyside Police to talk to our Junior School about online safety.
- There will be an additional e-safety lesson next week for Year 5, during which classes will draw up an online safety contract for each child to sign.
- Consequences for online misbehaviour may include suspension, and I will contact the police if an incident is deemed serious enough, as I cannot ensure children's safety outside of school.

- Merseyside Police have been invited to deliver an additional assembly for Year 5 next week.

What can you do at home?

- Consider removing social media apps from your child's phone (if they have one) until they are at least 13 years old.
- Consider removing groups with children you are not familiar with on all platforms, including gaming consoles.
- Check all messages and groups daily to see if anything mean or inappropriate has been said in single messages or group chats.
- Continue to build an honest relationship with your child, encouraging them to tell you about any negative behaviours they experience or witness on digital devices.
- If you find anything inappropriate through conversations or monitoring, please screenshot the messages and email them to us at safeguarding.stmonicas@schools.sefton.gov.uk.

Over many years, I have seen time and time again the negative impact that social media and the digital world can have on children. Social media is addictive and can bring out anger or poor decision making in any child. The one key counterbalance is pupils knowing that parents and carers keep check.

Please take some time to read this letter with your child tonight and discuss your arrangements at home. Develop a schedule where you regularly check your child's phone or console and ask about any deleted or edited messages. Monitor group threads carefully and report any concerns about your child or others in the groups directly to me.

I know we are all on the same page here and I understand how distressing it can be for parents when their child sends or receives a negative message. Fortunately, we have far fewer online incidents than many schools, and I am determined to keep it that way.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J. Gouldbourne
Headteacher