spring 2025 Online Safety Newsletter

**The impact of smartphones**

There is a growing concern on how excessive use of smartphones can affect children. We know at Ravenshall School many of our students have and use a Smartphone. In addition to the effects of seeing inappropriate content online, the risk of cyberbullying and grooming, it is important that we also highlight the effects of smartphone use on our children’s mental health. If your child is using a smartphone then please try to ensure they maintain a healthy screentime limit.

According to King’s College London, “two new studies of smartphone habits in teenagers have identified links between problematic smartphone use and depression, anxiety and insomnia.” You can read more about these studies here: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/teenswith-problematic-smartphone-useare-twice-as-likely-to-have-anxietyand-many-are-eager-to-cut-down>

Compass have published an article as well on what effects mobile phones have on children here:

https://www.compassuk.org/services/compass-changinglives/what-effects-do-mobile-phoneshave-on-children-and-young-peoplesmental-health/

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**The Stars Messenger App**

The Stars Messenger App is rated as 4+ on the App store. It is a free messaging and video app designed for children to use. Users need their friend’s username as well as their unique private Friend Code to add each other. There is also an optional Parent View available for a monthly charge. South West Grid for Learning provide a full guide to staying safe on this app as well as safety considerations:

https://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/ a-guide-to-staying-safe-withthe-stars-messaging-app/

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**Snapchat** A red circle with black numbers and a white background

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Snapchat is a social media app used for messaging and sharing photos and videos. **You must be 13+** to sign up. Users can send messages (snaps) to others that are only seen for a set time e.g., 10 seconds and users can also upload snaps to stories, which disappear after 24 hours.

**Key Concerns**

There are potential risks to using Snapchat, including:

• the risk of your child viewing content that is not appropriate for their age

• location sharing (via Snap Map) (this can be switched off)

• cyberbullying and contact from strangers

• excessive screen time

**Snapchat's Family Centre** is a set of parental controls and includes tools such as allowing you to:

• see who your child is friends with

• see who your child has sent messages (not the contents of conversations though), photos or videos to in the last week

• view a list of group members for groups that your child has been active in

• restrict content to limit access

• report any accounts that you are concerned about

You can learn more about Family Centre here:

<https://parents.snapchat.com/parental-controls?lang=en-GB>

**Safety tips**

Please make sure the appropriate privacy settings are set up on Snapchat, including who can see their location and also ensure your child knows how to block and report other users if necessary:

https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/articles/7012343074580- How-do-I-change-my-privacy-settings-on-Snapchat More information

For more detailed advice and information:

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/blogs/the-riskssnapchat-poses-to-children> <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/socialmedia/snapchat/>

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