



St Gilbert's Church of England Primary School

Foundry Road • Stamford • Lincolnshire • PE9 2PP

14th February 2014

Dear Parents

Following incidents this week involving pupils communicating with each other using virtual apps and also Instagram, I felt it was important to write to you to advise you of our concerns regarding the level of information that is coming to our attention.

I would like to bring to your attention a mobile phone app called 'Virtual Talk'. This is one of many similar apps that allow children from 4+ years of age to send messages to a virtual person. It seems however, that the more adult questions you ask, the more adult the responses will become and even goes as far as asking you where you live and whether you want to meet up. Additional to our concerns is that this app allows children the opportunity to live out a conversation which they could then use as a model when talking with a real person which naturally could create a safeguarding problem. We have also had instances when the use of Instagram outside of school has created problems in school.

In addition, the level of language being used by some of our pupils is exceptionally adult and what has come to the fore is that this language is being gained from films and also from games that they are playing.

The school has therefore decided to review its E-Safety programme.

- We will continue to work alongside Alan Mackenzie, our internet safety consultant, to develop our curriculum and ensure there are E-safety programmes for all children in each year group throughout the school.
- An updated E-Safety policy will be sent out to you.
- Another E-Safety evening for parents will be organised which will focus on how we as a school and you as parents can ensure that our children are really aware of what they are doing whilst using the internet and how they can ensure they are being absolutely safe.
- From 24th February only those pupils in Years 5 and 6 walking on their own to school or home after the school day will be allowed a phone in school. We will provide permission forms to be completed by parents which will give more detail.
- E-Safety newsletters will be uploaded onto the website regularly to keep us all up to date as technology moves so fast!!

Over half term, I would urge you to review the apps and the games that your children use whether it is on a mobile phone, tablet or other device such as a PC, particularly apps that allow communication with another person (virtual or real). If there are any that you don't recognise, please look on the internet (Google search) to see what the purpose of the app is and whether there are any concerns highlighted in reviews.

Many thanks for your support in this matter. I look forward to working in partnership with you to ensure all pupils are increasingly astute as to the importance of e-safety.

Yours sincerely

Miss F Dicker
Headteacher

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