

Dear Parents / Carers

It has come to my attention that some children have been using the internet and social media in particular as a platform to communicate messages to and about their friends which could be deemed as hurtful. This inevitably has an effect on children's relationships in school and negatively impacts on their learning.

The same rules of friendship apply online

Understandably the internet is an obvious quick and easy communication tool for all of us not least children. It becomes integral to their friendships, whether they communicate through Skype, Minecraft, roblox, Tik Tok or other services that facilitate interaction. However the children must understand that rules around friendship in school still apply when at home and online. In short children need to know how to be a good friend to others in all situations, and understand that values are transferrable.

Consequences and conversations

Discussions surrounding respect are crucial with children. It can be easy for a child to make mistakes online, because in the absence of face-to-face conversations, a child's behaviour may be misunderstood by their friends and feelings can be hurt. It is vital that children are taught to think before they post, and consider the impact of the content they share, whether it's a joke, message, photo or video. They must also consider the vocabulary that they use – if it is unacceptable face to face – it is unacceptable online too.

As a school, we work incredibly hard and spend a lot of time helping pupils to understand the challenges of childhood friendships, and the importance of respecting others. This may be in PSHE, during circle time, or incorporated into other curriculum areas. At the same time, we know that children are excited and inspired by technology, and are learning to navigate websites, online games, consoles, etc from a very young age. It is therefore essential, that discussions surrounding friendship are extended to the online environment, as soon as children begin to show an interest in the internet. We also regularly address, during online safety sessions, the consequences and harmful effects bullying through technology can have and give the children the support and skills to be good friends online.

At home please support school in reiterating the message that what's right and wrong in face-to-face interactions, is also right or wrong on the internet.

Please note that the school's website has guides for many internet gaming and communication sites. If you have any questions regarding this matter – please do not hesitate in speaking with me.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Hanley
Head Teacher