



Head Teacher: Mrs Rebecca Mee

Flatts Lane, Calverton, Nottingham, NG14 6JZ

Tel: 01159652291 Fax: 01159655701

office@sirjohnsherbrooke.notts.sch.uk

www.sirjohnsherbrooke.co.uk

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Online Safety and Supporting Our Pupils

Dear Parents and carers,

I am writing to address an important matter concerning online safety and the well-being of our pupils.

I have this morning been made aware of an incident over the weekend involving a group of Year 6 children communicating via WhatsApp. Unfortunately, this resulted in some extremely concerning, unkind exchanges and distress for some pupils. While this took place outside of school, we take the emotional well-being of our children very seriously and have a duty to work with those involved to provide the necessary support.

This situation serves as an important reminder of the challenges children can face when using social media and messaging apps. Many platforms, including WhatsApp, have a minimum age requirement of 16, yet we understand that some children may have access to these services. As a school, we actively educate pupils on responsible online behaviour, but we also encourage parents to have open discussions with their children about the risks and responsibilities of using these platforms appropriately.

To support you in this, we recommend:

- **Regularly checking your child's online activity and who they are communicating with.**
- **Encouraging open conversations about online interactions** and ensuring they know how to seek help if they feel upset or unsafe.
- **Setting clear boundaries** around technology use, including appropriate times and places for using devices as well as appropriate conduct.
- **Using parental controls** where possible to help manage screen time and online interactions.

- **Contact the police** if any messages of a threatening nature have been made to your child online, taking screenshots as evidence of this.

To support your children:

- **We have taken statements** from the children involved.
- **We will follow our safeguarding policy** and consider consequences for any children if this behaviour persists.
- All Year 6 children have been spoken to regarding this incident and had an **additional online safety session in school today** to reinforce positive, respectful and responsible digital communication.
- **We have reminded children to speak with any of their trusted adults**, in school or at home if they have any concerns around online communications.
- **We will offer emotional support** to the children who have been negatively affected.
- **We have sought external professional advice** and will provide further support for our pupils.
- **We will bring forward an empathy-based programme** that we had planned for next half term

We thank you for your ongoing support in keeping our children safe and happy both in school and online. If you have any concerns about your child's online behaviour or well-being, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'R Mee'.

Rebecca Mee.