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Dear parent/carer,

Your child's online summer / pupil online-safety survey

Earlier this year there was a national online-safety survey of pupils all around the UK. 40,000 pupils took part, and the results have recently been published. There were many interesting findings, but one which was striking was that **73% of children and young people trust their parents to talk about online safety, but only just over half spoke to them about it once a year or more. Equally, 2 in 5 pupils have never told anyone about the worst thing that has happened to them online.** You can look at the survey here pupilsurvey.lgfl.net

At Marner we talk to all the children about staying safe online and offline throughout the school year, but we would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to use the summer holidays as a chance to talk to your children about what they do online. The survey revealed many worrying findings but also many positives, so why not get involved and share some online experiences with your children this summer?

There are many scary stories in the press about particular apps, but it is important to remember that bad things can happen on good apps, so it is not a good idea to ban particular apps (**age-rated games are different – the age ratings are there for a reason**), but to talk to them about their behaviour online. Young children can be tricked into getting changed or undressed on camera, and the survey revealed worrying statistics about how often this happens, so without going into too much detail, it might be wise to talk about do's and don'ts on camera.

This year there has also been an increase in the number of incidents in the playground that have started as a result of online issues at home through the use of social media apps, mainly, through WhatsApp or online games.

WhatsApp is a Social Media app designed for children aged 16+; this means that none of our children should be using it.

We advise that if children want to contact each other that they do so through other means e.g. a text message or a telephone call. We do not promote private conversations in a group format. We have found that these types of group chats often lead to arguments and disagreements.

The same message can be read in different ways, with different meanings. For example a simple comment such as “I don’t want to go!” might be perceived as someone shouting or being unkind, when actually the person who wrote it might just be stating that they don’t want to go somewhere.

We advise that children are educated in how some messages can be misinterpreted. We do tackle this subject through PSHE/Online safety lessons, but we feel that you, as parents and carers could also provide advice to your children, as they become increasingly involved in communication which is not face to face.

In order to maintain the safety of the children at Marner it is vitally important that we work together to raise awareness and increase understanding of the potential dangers in this area and that you remain vigilant of your child’s use of social media in its many different and ever growing forms.

The occurrences and reported incidents of misuse of social media sites mainly happen at home, after school hours, when children have access to web sites that are blocked in school. With this in mind, and in response to concerned parents who have asked for advice regarding internet safety, it is important for us to point out the risks of unregulated use of such sites, the need for informed decisions to be made as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not and when and how to monitor their use, particularly at night time.

We strongly advise a device free bedroom policy after bedtime to allow for uninterrupted sleep and rest.

Here are some ideas for help and support over the holidays:

- If you need general online safety advice or help with parental control settings for your home internet or devices, why not call the NSPCC / O2 parent online-safety helpline on 0808 800 5002.
- There is an excellent tablet app from Internet Matters built to help parents have a conversation about online safety with their children. Just search Internet Matters on the app store
- Search NSPCC NetAware on the app store for an excellent ‘app about apps’ with overviews of all the top sites, apps and games that your children play (but ask them first for an overview!).
- Look at parentsafe.lgfl.net to find links to all the above, plus family agreements (maybe avoid some arguments!), the latest screen time advice and more besides.
- **Information for parents on Fortnite: Battle Royale (PEGI rated 12+)**
<https://www.besa.org.uk/news/what-schools-need-to-know-about-fortnite-battle-royale/>
- You can find information about age ratings on games just search PEGI.

Very importantly the survey revealed that family, friends and fun were three things that children and young people love online, so we wish you lots of all three together over the summer holidays.

Kind regards,

Ruth Whitfield
Assistant Headteacher