

Dear parents and carers,

It has come to our attention that some children within school have access, or own, a social media account outside of school. As an establishment with safeguarding responsibilities, we see it as important to keep you up to date on changes, implications and concerns we have regarding the use of the internet.

Media	Age requirement	Areas of concern
Whatsapp messenger	16	All messages, images and attachments are stored by an online database. The concern lies in that the data is encrypted, meaning that no one except the user, recipient, and the application themselves can see what is being sent. The biggest concern here is that there is no control over what is sent or received.
Kik	18 (13 with parental consent)	
WeChat	18 (13 with parental consent)	
YouTube	18 (13 with parental consent)	Videos are unrestricted, can be uploaded by anyone and can contain unwanted media; swearing, violence, gore, indecent images etc. The comments section is also unmonitored for the most part, meaning this can become a platform for "trolling" and cyberbullying.
Vine	17	Videos can be sent by anyone and can contain anything. Completely unrestricted media.
Facebook	13	Can be contacted by anyone, join groups without needing approval first. Some media on Facebook can contain swearing, violence, gore, indecent images etc. There is no guarantee who you are talking to is who they say they are, and there is a chance that they may share something that upsets or offends you. Often Facebook will not remove things unless they meet specific criterion. Can be an online platform for cyberbullying or grooming.
Instagram	13	Can be contacted by anyone. Some media on Instagram can contain swearing, violence, gore, indecent images etc. These can also promote a negative body image. Another platform for cyberbullying.
Snapchat	13	Can be sent photos by anyone who knows your username and sent messages. All images and messages are saved by Snapchat and the photos, although deemed to be temporary, can be saved by the recipient.
TikTok	13	This is an app that allows people to share videos of them singing, performing and dancing to an audience, and these videos can be publically shared and can even be streamed live.

Alongside this, it is important to acknowledge the content within games that sets their age limitations by the Games Rating Authority.

- Games are rated for 12-years and over if they include **non-graphic violence to human or animal characters**, a slightly higher threshold of violence to fantasy characters or significant nudity or bad language.
- Games are rated 16-years and over if the depiction of **violence or sexual activity looks the same as it would do in normal life. Drug and tobacco references also trigger the age limit.**
- Games are rated 18-years and over if there is a **"gross" level of violence likely to make the viewer feel a sense of revulsion.**

Although it is not illegal for children below the set age to play these games, it can have a seriously negative impact on their wellbeing and can affect their social and emotional development.

As can be seen, none of these Social Medias are age appropriate for the children at Monkshouse, or any primary school. It is our responsibility to ensure that children are safe online within school, however outside of school we have no control over what they are exposed to online. With that being said, we will be required to follow the school's safeguarding policy if we have evidence that an individual's safety is at risk due to what they are exposed to outside of school. We hope you take this into consideration and take action to ensure that children are not exposed to media that is not deemed age appropriate. If you have any concerns or questions regarding this information, feel free to contact the school.

Many thanks,

Callum Price – ICT and E-Safety coordinator