



An information newsletter for the Gawthorpe Community Academy

Social Media

As a school, we are increasingly dealing with issues related to social media, and in particular, Instagram Direct. Whilst these are not always cyberbullying incidents, the misuse of instant messaging features have a big part to play. We have addressed these issues in school through specific e-safety lessons however, as these incidents happen outside of school we ask that as parents, you work with us to help educate our children in how to use these tools responsibly.

Our designated e-Safety page on the school website has some excellent links that provide you with a wealth of information, advice and resources.

Age restrictions on social media

Some apps, sites and games online have age restrictions. Getting to grips with all the different age ratings can be a nightmare. Here's a guide to the main ones.

Our top tip, though, is to check out the terms and conditions for sites your children are using or want to use.

OK for under-13s?

Why 13? A lot of very popular sites and apps make 13 the minimum age for users. This is because the United States passed a law in 1998 that said that companies could not collect data from children under the age of 13 without their parents' permission. The expense and work

involved led many companies to restrict their services to over-13s.

These are services that are either designed for children aged under 13, or are specifically designed to be used by under-13s providing they have parental consent:

Club Penguin - A site specifically for under-13s, with parental consent required.

Moshi Monsters - A site specifically for under-13s, with parental consent required.

Over-13s only

Some of the best-known sites on the web are for over 13s only. However, in the UK, under-13s registering for these sites aren't breaking UK law but they are breaching the terms and conditions of the website. It's also worth remembering that because these sites are designed for over-13s, they won't necessarily have procedures in place to make them suitable places for younger children. These sites include:

Google: To have a Google account and access all their main services including YouTube and Gmail you need to be over 13. That does not mean that an under-13 shouldn't watch videos on YouTube or use Google search, it just means they can't create an account and upload content.

Facebook You need to be 13 to have a Facebook account. It is a violation of their terms and conditions to create an account for someone under 13.

Twitter It's not easy to find how old you have to be to use Twitter. The information they provide for

parents doesn't specify an age nor does the information for teens. However, in their privacy policy they say that their services are not directed to persons under 13.

Instagram You need to be over 13 to use Instagram.

Snapchat You need to be over 13 to have a Snapchat account.

Over-16s only

Very few services set this as the age limit. Once again, the limit is not a legal requirement in the UK but is a matter of the site's terms and conditions.

WhatsApp This app requires all its users to be 16 and over.

One of the most popular social media sites amongst our children appears to be Instagram.

What is Instagram?

Instagram is a photo-sharing app with a whole lot of emphasis on the sharing – more like photo-enhanced socializing. It's a way of communicating mainly through images. Young people like taking, enhancing, sharing and commenting on photos - but they're not just commenting; they're socializing with photos, creating ongoing mixed-media conversations that include plenty of likes and links. The latest version of the Instagram application has come up with a new feature that enables private messaging between friends called Instagram Direct.

What's the best way to help kids stay safe in Instagram?

Respecting ourselves and others makes us safer. Our posts and comments become part of our public image. Respecting others in the way that photos are shared, tagged and commented on reduces risk to ourselves and to others. While most kids are smart about this, parents may want to be sure their children aren't posting inappropriate photos or having inappropriate interactions with people they don't know, which leads to the next question...

Should my child's profile be private?

Having a public account on Instagram means anyone can follow you. A private account means strangers can't follow you, so many parents prefer their children to use Instagram with a private account for sharing only with friends and relatives. Monitoring the activity on your child's account is always a good idea. That doesn't, though, guarantee that your child won't be seen on Instagram (or any other photo-sharing service) because people post photos of each other. So even if your child doesn't have an account, that doesn't mean they won't appear in a photo on Instagram. This means it's much better for children to be aware of the implications of posting pictures of other people without their permission and to be clear about what to do if they're unhappy with images that have appeared of themselves.

As with all social media, how positive or negative a young person's experiences are on Instagram depends mainly on the person and their friends and how they use the app. If you haven't already, it is worth having a conversation with your child about responsible photo sharing and communicating respectfully with others online.

Responsible photo-sharing

Privacy can't be perfect. Even if your photos are private, your profile is public (anyone can see your profile photo, username and bio). You can add up to 10 lines of text about yourself, so you may want to talk about your children about what's appropriate here.

Respect other people's privacy. If someone else is in a photo you post, make sure that person's OK with you sharing or tagging them in it.

Your posting has impact. Think about how a photo you post affects others – whether they're in the photo or not. Sometimes it's the friends not in the photo who can be hurt (because they weren't included).

Think about your location-sharing. The 'Add to your Photo Map' feature gives you the option of adding a location to a photo. It's turned off by default, but it's 'sticky' – so, once turned on, it stays on until you turn it off. You can always turn it back on but, for each picture you share, think about whether you really want people to know where you snapped it.

Your photos represent you. That probably seems obvious, but remember they can keep on representing you well into the future, because content posted online or with phones is pretty impossible to take back. So it's a good idea to think about how photos you post now will reflect on you down the line. If you think a photo might hurt a job prospect, damage a relationship or upset your grandmother, consider not sharing it.

Manage your profile. Your photos appear in the Photos of You section of your profile. They can be visible to anyone unless your account is private. Others can tag you in photos they take but, if you don't like a photo, you can hide it from your profile or untag yourself (it'll still be visible on Instagram but not associated with your screen name and not in your profile). If you don't want photos to appear in Photos of You automatically, you can prevent that by turning off 'Add Automatically' by clicking on the Gear button and choosing 'Add Manually.' (Android users, tap the Photos of You tab, then the three small squares.)

Consider the whole photo. The background of a photo could indicate where the picture was taken or what the people in it were doing at the time. For example, has your child got an image of themselves in school uniform, clearly showing which school they attend, and who can see this picture?

Your photos could show up anywhere. Remember that anything digital can be copied and shared by others. So even if you limit the audience, be careful not to share anything that could be a problem if someone were to pass it around.

Direct messaging and cyberbullying

With the growth of social media and the average age of children owning smartphones set at 10, research shows that Cyberbullying is affecting more young people, more frequently.

Cyberbullying can occur through:

Text bullying – Sending mean, abusive or threatening text messages

Social media bullying – Posting cruel and unkind messages on sites such as Instagram or Facebook, or setting up a fake profile or group about someone

Instant messaging bullying – Sending nasty, unkind or threatening instant messages or saying offensive and mean things through group chats

Sharing images – Publishing or sharing photos, videos or webcam footage of someone without their permission to provoke a reaction from others

Interactive gaming bullying – Purposefully blocking, ignoring or excluding an individual from a multiplayer game

On September 1, 2015, Instagram announced improvements to their Instagram Direct feature that now allows users to leave a group conversation. Previously, users added to a conversation were locked in, and whilst they could mute messages, they could not leave it altogether. This could have been especially traumatic if a child was the subject of abuse in a conversation and meant a group conversation could be an unescapable online bully circle. These improvements are a great step in the right direction for Instagram, owned by Facebook, and will help to reduce the risk and abuse that your child could face on Instagram.

Also, if someone your child doesn't know/follow sends them a message, it'll appear as a request in their inbox. To decline or allow the message, they can tap the message then select Decline or Allow at the bottom of the screen. When they allow a message request from someone, their future messages will go directly to the child's inbox.

Your child can report abusive messages that are sent to them with Instagram Direct by tapping and holding the message, then selecting Report. Also, if they want to stop someone from sending them abusive or threatening messages on Instagram Direct, they can block that person or report their profile.

How does your child leave a group conversation in Instagram Direct?

When they leave a group conversation, they won't get messages from the group unless someone adds them back to the conversation. To leave a group message in Instagram Direct:

1. In the top right of Feed tap:
2. Tap the group conversation you'd like to leave
3. In the top right tap:
4. Tap Leave Conversation, then tap to confirm

Bear in mind that your child may need to manually update their Instagram app to ensure the updates are installed.

If you have any concerns regarding online safety, or would like further advice, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Mr R Noble

Thank you to Mrs Scott at Horbury Primary School for the content of this newsletter.