Hoyland Springwood Primary School

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Chat Apps and Gaming during COVID-19 – please be aware and keep you child(ren) safe!

Dear Parents/Carers,

Due to the current circumstances that we find ourselves in, children will be spending a lot more time online (especially older pupils) than they normally would. They will be using online methods to communicate with friends and complete school work. This gives them increased access to chat apps (of which there are many) and possibly communicating with people they don't know, who are of a different age and gender than what is displayed. This can also be said of gaming, where children play against other gamers online, who they may not know. I am writing to encourage you to continue to keep your child safe online, whilst at home.

It is vital that you know who your children are talking to online. Can you answer these questions about who you child is in contact with?

- Are they a friend from school?
- Have they mentioned them before?
- Have you met/seen this person?
- If they are a friend of a friend – how do you know they are who they say they are?
- Are all your children friends online people you know and trust?

If any of these answers are no, it may be wise to have a conversation with your child(ren) about who they may be speaking to. This is especially significant as online child sexual exploitation during COVID-19 is seeing a peak, which is very frightening for us as parents and professionals and potentially very dangerous for our children.

It is important to share such information to keep everyone safe.

We urge you to have open discussions at home and regularly speak to your child/children about their use of devices and the internet. Please check who they are speaking to and what they are doing when online on a regular basis so that you can assess the risks and keep them safe.

For other information and advice in relation to online safety and technology, please visit the following websites:
1. Parent Zone – Sign up for weekly updates on Online Safeguarding and other potential parenting issues - https://parentzone.org.uk/home
2. Digital Parenting – http://vodafonedigitalparenting.co.uk/
3. CEOP Online Safety - https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/
4. Thinkuknow - https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/
   The 'Thinkuknow' website offers videos that can be shown to your child/children at your discretion. These videos are widely used/shown in training, however we recommend that you watch any videos yourself before showing them to your child/children to make sure they are appropriate for their age. The link for a commonly used video is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=599I1E-rWTU&safe=active. Again, we ask that you watch this yourself prior to showing it to your child/children.
5. South Yorkshire Police - https://www.southyorks.police.uk/find-out/crime-prevention-advice/online-safety/

Many thanks for your continued support – stay safe and take care. We miss all of those who are not in school and we hope to see our whole school community reunited in September.

Mrs J Hunt
Headteacher & Designated Safeguarding Leader

Miss L Waugh
Computing and Online Safety Lead

Part of the Every Child Matters Academy Trust