



Ref: SS/gm

Executive Headteacher: **Gary Smith OBE**

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Dear Parents / Carers

**RE: SOCIAL MEDIA CONCERNS**

It has been brought to our attention of concerns regarding social media sites, please read the following information and discuss the importance of online safety with your child.

We are aware that a number of students subscribe to the social networking platform 'Discord'. The platform allows individuals to register from the age of 13 in order to discuss gaming, be it Pokémon Go or Fortnite, and allows for text and video streaming in this regard. Various forums have questioned the platform's suitability for the young and/or vulnerable, which is why we wanted to bring this to your attention. Please follow this link in order to understand the potential risks associated with this platform <https://www.familyzone.com/anz/families/blog/discord-what-parents-need-to-know>.

**Live streaming on TikTok and other platforms**

We want to make you aware of an emerging concern involving TikTok. There is a facility on TikTok whereby 1000 followers enables a person to be able to broadcast live, and some children and young people at school are broadcasting live using this and possibly other platforms at different times during the school day.

Live streaming is the broadcasting of live video to an audience or on a one-to-one basis in real time. During public live streams viewers can participate by 'liking' videos and adding comments which can be seen by the person broadcasting, and by other viewers. It is also possible for viewers to contact broadcasters who are live streaming or who have live streamed.

Any person with a TikTok or similar platform account can use live streaming. Many children and young people do this, for example to sing and dance and to talk about things, perhaps with the aim of attracting more viewers and to be someone who is 'trending' online.

Some example TikTok live streams were shown to me recently by the 'Two Johns' ([E-Safety Training](#)). I was able to see groups of students, who appeared to be at various different secondary schools, live streaming during the lunch period at school. The broadcasts I saw did not appear to include anything specific; they just seemed to be students who had decided to broadcast live on TikTok during their lunchtime, with other students coming in and out of the screen at different times.

This type of activity is popular among children and young people, including primary school children, and can be beneficial. For example broadcasting live may help to develop a person's creativity and improve their confidence, enable them to speak about something that matters to them on a wider platform, or perhaps as an additional way to stay in touch with friends.



## Concerns

There are risks for children and young people associated with broadcasting live online, and in engaging with other people's broadcasts, including:

- viewing inappropriate content (such as sexual or violent videos);
- communicating with people that are unknown to them;
- children and young people may be broadcasting from their bedroom, unsupervised – making an additional forum in which abuse may take place;
- there could be thousands of people watching a live stream at any time, including those who are looking to harm children and young people – it is possible to move a child or young person from a live stream to a private one;
- coercion or manipulation to create and share indecent images of themselves while live streaming;
- live videos can be recorded and shared.

The [Internet Watch Foundation](#) found that 98% of live streamed abuse on mostly private platforms showed children aged 13 and under, suggesting that this age group may be more at risk when live streaming. Research by the [London Grid for Learning](#) showed that 1 in 6 pupils aged 7-16 taking part in a survey said that something had happened while they were live streaming that made them feel uncomfortable, and more than 1 in 20 pupils had been asked to change or get undressed.

## What you can do to support children and young people

Schools may wish to cover live streaming and the associated risks during online safety lessons, and alert parents and carers.

Children and young people can be reassured that if something happens while live streaming it is not their fault, and reminded to seek support from school staff or their parents and carers if they are worried about anything, or if something has happened. Parents and carers can be reminded of the risks and ways to support their children with online safety.

Resources are also available from various organisations including those referred to above, and others such as [Thinkuknow](#), and the [NSPCC](#).

If you wish to discuss this further, please contact Sarah on [sarah.smith@marketfield.essex.sch.uk](mailto:sarah.smith@marketfield.essex.sch.uk) or telephone 01206 825195.

Yours sincerely



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