



Grand Avenue Primary & Nursery School

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Wednesday, 22nd November 2023

Dear Parent / Carer

Mobile Phones and Social Media

I am having to write this letter because once again, children have been using their mobile phones unsupervised and I have had reports of some extremely unpleasant and threatening messages being sent and received. This has had a detrimental effect on a number of children in Year 6.

I have spoken to the children and they know exactly the potential dangers of these messaging groups and their responsibilities when using them. However, they do not yet have the emotional maturity to follow this through without close adult supervision.

Some of the hateful messages have been coming from older children not directly connected to this school. Children in Year 6, despite being fully aware that this is not acceptable, have added these people to some groups and given them personal details of some classmates. I am speaking to the parents of the children I have been told have done this.

It is vital that you support your children to use their phones appropriately and closely ensure they do not give out personal details – not their own nor those of others – nor reply to or send unkind personal messages.

The internet has become a big part of our lives and at school we have done all we can to educate the children on the correct use and potential dangers of social media and messaging apps. We now ask you to ensure the children put this into practice once outside of school.

I expect you talk to your child about this letter and your expectations of how they conduct themselves on social media and messaging sites.

Please bear in mind:

- Mobile phones are very difficult to lock down and so allow full connectivity to the internet and access to a range of apps and social media sites.
- Given they are carried by children when unsupervised by an adult; it is very difficult to control and monitor how they are being used so the phone history must be checked very frequently.
- Through natural curiosity, peer pressure or by accident, children are able to access things which they may not yet be mature enough to handle responsibly without strict adult supervision and guidance.
- When in a group – real or virtual - peer pressure can lead children to make poor choices.
- When using social media or networking applications, such as WhatsApp, children are drawn into posting things which they may not say to someone 'face-to-face' but such things are instantly seen by a wide audience. In addition, they may reveal information that should be kept more private: *once it is 'out there' it stays 'out there'*.
- Children are able to set up their own chat groups and add anyone, known to them or unknown to them – *the potential dangers of this are real.*



Enjoying Learning - Exceeding Expectations



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- Without monitoring, children may over use them – sometimes late into the night.
- Many applications and games have recommended age restrictions for a reason - WhatsApp Age 13year limit for example – these restrictions are very clear indications that children younger than these age limits should not be using them or at the very least, not without close supervision and monitoring.
- Pictures should not be taken without consent, nor, under any circumstances, should photographs be posted on social media without consent.

Mobile phones are **not to be used** by pupils in school. If children bring them into school it is on the understanding that we will collect them in, but cannot accept responsibility for them during the school day as we do not have a completely secure place to store them.

As some of the content of these messages have been extremely unpleasant and threatening, we have asked the local police to come in and talk to the year group.

I thank you for your understanding in this matter as we work together to ensure the well-being of your child so they enjoy their learning and exceed expectations.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Barrington
Headteacher



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