

Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025

## Dear Parents & Carers,

We are writing to you jointly as the headteachers of the local schools across East Leake and the surrounding villages.

This is because we want to address the important issue of access to smart phones and age-inappropriate social media apps (such as Snapchat and WhatsApp) by children of our local primary schools.

We manage a growing number of incidents caused by children's inappropriate use of this technology. All our schools ensure that our curriculum teaches children how to be safe online, but we need your support to reinforce this message at home and help us reduce the amount of time spent dealing with online safety incidents.

It must be noted that these interactions never occur within school, as the use of mobile phones is strictly prohibited on school premises. Instead, the interactions happen outside of school hours and beyond each school's jurisdiction.

## Apps & Social Media

Children in primary school should not be accessing several of the apps they are using, and in many cases are not mature enough to manage the consequences of these appropriately. Our advice is that it is important to take seriously the age restriction for all apps, including Whatsapp. As parents, you have the choice and responsibility to allow or restrict your children's access to these apps.

*If a pupil has an online safety issue at school and we establish that they are in breach of an app's age restrictions, we reserve the right to report this to the social media company and have their account closed/removed.*

## Smartphones

We appreciate that it is a parent's right to choose when their child receives a smart phone, and we know many of you have concerns about if and when to do so – there is growing evidence which shows that smart phone use in childhood has damaging negative mental and physical effects on long-term health.

We feel it is worth 'busting' the myth that all children need a smartphone and that all children have them. One alternative is what is widely known as a 'dumb' phone, which allows children to simply make phone calls and receive messages. These are the basic Nokia or Motorola phones that were available before smart phones. These can be purchased new for roughly £20. This is a big saving compared to the price of a new smart phone and will still enable children to be contactable when walking to and from school.

## Summary

For those of you wishing to give your child access to social media apps or smartphones despite age restrictions, please be mindful of the risks to your child's well-being outlined above. We encourage you to have open and honest conversations with your children about these risks and to establish guidelines for safe and responsible use of social media. Only with your support, can the safety and well-being of all our children be secured.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter,

**Mr G Kenny**  
Brookside Primary School

**Mrs J Mellor**  
Costock C of E Primary School

**Miss J Allen**  
Gotham Primary School

**Mr P Fowlie**  
Lantern Lane Primary School

**Mrs S Thorne**  
Millside Spencer Academy

**Mrs S Philpott**  
Normanton-on-Soar  
Primary School

**Mr P Allen**  
Sutton Bonington  
Primary School

**Mr T Reid**  
East Leake Academy

Further information: **Smartphone Free Childhood**