

Dear Year 5 and 6 Parents and Carers,

September 2024

I am writing to you to share some concerns regarding the online experiences of some of our children, in particularly with reference to the widespread usage of WhatsApp, the popular messaging service. From speaking to our children in online safety lessons and from having to deal with occasional disputes between children that sometimes spill over into school, it seems that the use of WhatsApp is increasingly widespread amongst our school's older children. This matches the national picture, as according to Ofcom, WhatsApp is used by more than half of 3- to 17-year-olds in the UK (including one in three from the 8–11 bracket), despite its 13+ age restriction.

It is understandable that many families use the app due to its free messaging and convenience, however, there are many reasons why, as a school, we would strongly encourage you not to let your child have access to the app.

Until April of this year, WhatsApp had in place the age restriction of 16+ before this was lowered to 13+, this has created a false impression that the app is appropriate for primary-aged children. WhatsApp is considered by many to be simply a method of messaging contacts like family and friends in the same way you use text messaging on your smartphone. However, the app has increased its services and is now considered by many as a social media platform and this has created many more potential challenges in keeping children safe.

Attached below is some information on the challenges that the app provides around keeping children safe. The information included in this letter is not provided to promote the use of WhatsApp but to inform you of some of its potential challenges and dangers. Where, as a parent or carer, you choose to let your child use WhatsApp, please think very carefully about not letting your child use it without supervision and about making full use of the app's safety features.

As well as the potential risks, I would also stress that most children of primary age do not have the maturity levels to be able to handle the disputes and disagreements that unsupervised group chats can often create. Online conversations that often start with good intentions can unintentionally create anger and resentment that spill over into play and learning time at school; when this happens, it is very challenging and time-consuming to try and resolve these disagreements.

We are very lucky to have such a supportive parent body at Joan of Arc and we would be very appreciative with your support with this challenging area.

Yours Sincerely



Hugh Heneghan  
Deputy Headteacher

For further information -

[WhatsApp minimum age guidance](#)

[NSPCC advice on Whatsapp use](#)

[safety tips for WhatsApp-Internet matters](#)