



St Mary's Church of England School

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Over the course of this pandemic, we have maintained our promotion of online safety for children at our school. Screens are being used now more than ever for a variety of different purposes. Before the end of last half term, children were sent home with the digital parenting magazine which we have subscribed to as it serves a fantastic purpose in reminding us of some important things regarding monitoring children's internet use. An e-copy of this magazine can also be found attached to this letter. St Mary's is also subscribed to the Safer Schools app which updates us daily about safeguarding changes and any new information about social media apps that children use.

Back in December, Children in years 3-6 had the opportunity to engage in a live virtual assembly from Google's 'Be Internet Legends' scheme regarding their online safety which highlighted issues children may not have been aware of. To continue this, Peter Cowley, the Lead Adviser for Online Services and Safety for 'Achieving for Children', has kindly prepared a presentation and video for the parents of St Mary's to update them on some key changes for children's safety on the internet. The resources for this can be found via the link and QR code below. Please take a look and familiarise yourself with relevant updates about the social media apps that are quite prevalent at the moment. These include apps such as Tik Tok and Whatsapp. There are also some fantastic reminders and tips about how to manage your child's usage of their devices, ensure they are not livestreaming and oversharing on the internet.

bit.ly/afcsaferathome



Key updates:

- As of early May 2021, **Among Us** has updated its mobile platform to include direct integrations to **Twitch** and **Discord**. While this is great news for avid gaming streamers, it makes sharing gameplay and watching other gamers more accessible. Players must have full accounts on both platforms to access this feature and they both claim users must be **13+** but there is no age verification process. The public nature of these platforms is a concern as it significantly increases the capacity for stranger interaction. As both are public platforms, players may be exposed to inappropriate material from other players.
- Among Us** has two different game types, 'local' and 'online'. Playing local, means you are playing with *people you know* whereas an online game means it is public and you can play it with anyone online.
- New features on Tik Tok include the ability for parents to change settings remotely to block them from carrying out searches, and to prevent strangers from seeing their posts. Children can still override these limitations but not without their parents being told.

There are a range of posters on the e-safety page of our school website regarding the ins and outs of many social media apps that children are using at the moment. Please take a moment to familiarise yourself with these as they provide lots of information and tips: <https://st-marys.richmond.sch.uk/safeguarding/>

Yours sincerely,
Hannah Longley
Computing Lead