



www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk

Dear Parent or Carer,

Did you know that some children at school have Facebook profiles even though the permitted minimum age to use the site is 13, according to the sites terms and conditions?

Together with Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board, we are committed to promoting the safe use of the internet and we feel it's our responsibility to raise some concerns with you.

Websites such as Facebook offer amazing communication and learning opportunities, however they are created with an audience in mind which is specifically over 13 years old. Sadly we know from professional experience that some of the risks for children under 13 using the site may include:

- Facebook use "age targeted" advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other inappropriate nature, depending on the age they stated they were when they registered
- Children may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on Facebook is not moderated, and can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children
- Photographs shared by users are not moderated and children could be exposed to inappropriate images or persuaded to post inappropriate images of themselves
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options
- Facebook could be exploited by bullies and for other inappropriate contact
- Facebook can't and doesn't verify its members so it's important to remember that if your child can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else
- Facebook and similar online sites have been used by people to contact children with the intention of grooming, exploiting and sexually abusing them

These profiles will have been created away from school and sometimes by the child, their friends, siblings or even parents.

However, we are asking parents to be aware of the risks of underage use of such sites.

We will certainly take action (such as reporting under aged profiles) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any children.

However, when your child is old enough to have a Facebook profile, we strongly advise you to:-

- Check their profile is set to 'private' and that only friends can see information that is posted
- Monitor your child's use and talk to them about safe and appropriate online behaviour

- Be open with them about the dangers of sharing personal information and posting offensive messages or photos
- Help them to install the CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) application from www.facebook.com/clickceop on their profile. This places a bookmark on their profile to CEOP and the Report Abuse button which has been known to deter offenders
- Have a look at the advice for parents/carers from Facebook www.facebook.com/help/?safety=parents
- Set up your own profile so you understand how the site works and ask them to have you as a friend on their profile so you know what they are posting online

Make sure your child understands the following rules:

- Always keep your profile private
- Never accept friends you don't know in real life
- Never post anything which could reveal your identity
- Never post anything you wouldn't want your parents to see
- Never agree to meet somebody you only know online
- Always tell someone if you feel threatened or someone upsets you

We'd recommend that all parents visit the '[CEOP Think U Know](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)' website for more information on keeping your child safe online www.thinkuknow.co.uk

If you would like any further information please don't hesitate to contact Mr Williams who leads on internet safety in school.

Yours sincerely,

S.L. Irving

Headteacher