

**SPRINGVALE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**01226 760930**

**Headteacher: Mr L McClure**

**l.mcclure@springvaleprimary.org**

**www.springvaleprimary.org**

@SpringvalePS

**eSafety and Cyberbulling Monday 29th January 2018**

Dear families,

As part of our commitment to work together to raise standards at Springvale I wanted to make everyone aware of my concerns around the number of friendship incidents in school that appear to be affected by use of phones or tablets out of school.

Our school does lots of excellent work around eSafety and we are looking forward to welcoming a specialist leader in eSafety in a few weeks to work with all of our pupils and staff to further enhance this vital area of the curriculum. The world is always changing and our young people have so many amazing experiences and resources with which to enrich and enjoy their childhood. Like all ‘tools’, tablets and phones give us amazing access to a wealth of information, communication opportunities and social interactions.

Most advice/guidelines suggest that primary school aged children **should not** have access to a phone or social media accounts but I refuse to state this fact alone as a deterrent to eSafety issues. I think we should teach children how to use these tools safely and effectively as the world that our learners enter is likely to be one that relies almost entirely on being computer and technology literate.

My personal belief is that we should teach the key messages and, when children prove that they are mature enough to enjoy the technology safely and appropriately, that it is a parent’s decision when the time is right to allow a child to use a phone or tablet. We would always stress that this usage should be linked to tight parental controls on web access and app usage. There have been many high profile eSafety breaches in popular apps of late, many of which allowed open access to a child’s information or image (see music.ly as a very recently and troubling example).

Sadly, some of our children are starting to have significant friendship issues in school that link directly to online interactions or text/Whatsapp messages. Some parents are reporting inappropriate content to messages or children ‘badgering’ each other to communicate.

In response to this I need to make the following stance clear:

1. School cannot and will not ‘police’ things that happen out of school and we will not apply our behaviour systems to said incidents
2. We always advise to take a screenshot of said concerning messages/interactions for evidence
3. School’s advice is to always make us aware in case these issues spill over into school but, if you or your child feel unsafe at any point then you should report the issue to the police
4. Parents must always ensure that their child is using any said technology appropriately. While we do not wish to overstep the mark of what is a parental choice; the most obvious way to keep the child/their peers safe is to remove the phone (indefinitely or for an agreed amount of time until it can be used appropriately)

I have contacted the police and asked if they could come into school to further supplement our curriculum and talk to children about the rise in online bullying and modern technological social issues. This will give the children some clear advice about safe use of phones and tablets. This work is being planned very soon. I will contact parents again in due course but I wanted to make you aware of my concerns and our overall stance on these matters.

Thank you for your support, as always.

**Kind Regards**

**Mr L McClure**

**Headteacher**