

Northwood Road  
Thornton Heath  
Surrey CR7 8HX

Telephone: 020 8653 4240  
Fax: 020 8768 0295

Email: [office@davidlivingstone.croydon.sch.uk](mailto:office@davidlivingstone.croydon.sch.uk)  
Website: [www.davidlivingstone.croydon.sch.uk](http://www.davidlivingstone.croydon.sch.uk)

Interim Head of School: Ms C Mitchell  
Executive Headteacher: Mr T Mills

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been brought to our attention that some of our pupils have social media profiles despite being below the permitted minimum age to use these sites. **Whatsapp has a minimum age restriction of 16 years old. TikTok and Snapchat both have a minimum age restriction of 13 years old.** We are also aware that some pupils have been using Whatsapp to send inappropriate messages to one another.

David Livingstone Academy is committed to keeping our children safe and to promoting the safe, responsible use of the internet. As such, we feel that it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern.

While we will continue to teach our pupils about e-safety, we ask that parents monitor children's use of phones, tablets and computers to ensure that they are safe online. Some of our older pupils have mobile phones to contact parents and carers when coming to and from school alone. Please ensure that you have spoken to your child about how to use these devices safely and appropriately. While at school, phones are collected at the start of the day and kept safely in the school office until hometime.

Alongside the information at the end of this letter regarding Whatsapp, we can also recommend the following sites as sources of information for parents:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety/>

<https://parentzone.org.uk/advice/social-media-apps>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/livestreaming-online-video-apps/>

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

As always, thanks for your continued support and please talk to a member of staff if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely,



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Interim Head of School

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### WhatsApp: a guide for parents and carers (from parentinfo.org)



#### What is WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is a mobile messaging app which allows users to exchange messages using existing phone contacts without having to pay text message fees. WhatsApp Messenger is available on most mobile devices including iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia. WhatsApp users can create groups and send each other unlimited images, video and audio messages.

#### How much does it cost?

For all phone types, WhatsApp is free to download. WhatsApp used to charge a 69p per year subscription fee, but this has since been removed. (Jan 2016).

WhatsApp uses an Internet connection using 4G or Wi-Fi to send and receive messages to your contacts. As long as the user hasn't exceeded the data limit or is connected to a free Wi-Fi network, messaging over WhatsApp should not cost extra.

#### Does WhatsApp have any age restrictions?

As of May 2018, WhatsApp's **minimum age of use is 16 years old** if you live in the European Union, or a country that has adopted the GDPR, as the UK has. It was previously 13 and WhatsApp has not yet said what will happen to users between 13 and 16 who already held accounts under the old terms and conditions. By using WhatsApp, a user agrees to provide certain personal information such as their mobile phone number, billing and mobile device information.

If WhatsApp learns that identifiable information of a child under 16 has been collected on the WhatsApp Site or WhatsApp Service, then WhatsApp may deactivate the account.

#### Should I be concerned about WhatsApp as a parent/carer?

WhatsApp is a great way for young people to socialise with their friends.

Children can only talk to existing contacts on their phone. Although this may feel safer, it's still important to remember that some content shared may not be appropriate for children, or they have contacts (strangers) in their phone who they have never met face to face.

Likewise, as with all social media, caution is advised over your child's digital footprint, particularly the content (photos, videos and messages) they choose to share via WhatsApp. Once shared, it can be copied, re shared and posted anywhere online.

#### Group chats on WhatsApp

WhatsApp also contains a group chat function. The feature lets users chat with up to 100 people in one conversation stream. Each group is set up by one contact who becomes the group admin – they're the only user who can add or remove participants and change/add new group admins.

Group conversations usually take place between friends. But sometimes, users can be added to a group where they don't know everyone else. Even if fellow users in the group aren't contacts, they will still be able to see messages your child posts in the group, and your child will be able to see theirs. Likewise, if they're added to a group with someone they've blocked, the blocked person will be able to contact them there.

Therefore, it's possible they could see or be contacted by someone they don't know and could be vulnerable to content posted by this person.

Although a user cannot control who adds them to a group chat, **they can always control their own participation within it** – they can leave whenever they want to.

*It's a good idea to advise your child that if they are in a group chat with someone they don't know and are uncomfortable with, they should exit the group and speak to you about it.*

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### How do privacy settings work on WhatsApp?

WhatsApp's default privacy setting allows any other WhatsApp user to view your profile photo, status and when you were last using the app.

You can specify that your child's WhatsApp account (when they were last online, profile photo, status) can be seen by:

**Everyone** - all WhatsApp users.

**My Contacts** - the contacts from their address book only. This is the recommended option for most users.

**Nobody**

Talk to your child about their privacy settings and ask them to adjust to '*my contacts*' if they have them set to '*everyone*' by following the steps below:

Privacy settings are accessed here:

**WhatsApp > Settings > Account > Privacy**

### Live location

WhatsApp shows other users your location. You can turn this off under **Settings > Privacy** within the app, or turn off background location under **Location Settings** on whichever devices WhatsApp is being used on.

### How do I report a user to WhatsApp?

There is no direct way to report a user, or specific abuse, other than to block them from sending you further messages. To do this, tap:

### **Settings > Account > Privacy > Blocked Contacts**

WhatsApp messages sent by a blocked contact will not show up on your child's phone and will never be delivered to them. The 'last seen' status information and profile picture will no longer be visible to blocked contacts.

To permanently delete a contact in WhatsApp, you will need to delete them from your phone's list of contacts.

If you have any concerns about grooming, sexual abuse or exploitation on WhatsApp or on any online app or site, Report to NCA-CEOP (the National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command) at [www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre).

### How do I disable a WhatsApp account?

Go to:

### **Settings > Account > Delete My Account**

This will remove all account information from the service including deleting all message history, and removing the user from all WhatsApp groups.

The advice published on Parent Info is provided by independent experts in their field and not necessarily the views of Parent Zone or NCA-CEOP.