

St. John's CE Primary School

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Our Core Christian Values

Compassion, Courage and Endurance, Interior Posture and Wisdom

Dear parents and carers of Year 6,

We have recently been made aware of concerns regarding a WhatsApp group involving some children in Year 6. Within this group there have been reports of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour, including the sharing of indecent images and the use of derogatory homophobic language. We understand that some messages and images may have caused upset, distress and concern for the children involved.

Although this activity has taken place outside of school and beyond the school day, its impact is being felt within school. Incidents of this nature can have a significant effect on children's wellbeing, relationships, behaviour and mental health, both in and out of school. In addition, valuable learning time is lost when staff are required to investigate concerns, support pupils and manage the consequences of incidents that originate online.

Whilst we cannot regulate children's use of personal devices and online platforms outside school, we have a duty of care to take safeguarding concerns seriously and to inform parents and carers when issues are brought to our attention. As set out in Keeping children safe in education 2026, schools are required to be alert to safeguarding issues that can arise through online activity, including child-on-child abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, discriminatory behaviour, the sharing of indecent images and other conduct that may place a child at risk of harm. The guidance is clear that safeguarding incidents can take place both inside and outside school and can occur online as well as face-to-face. The concerns reported in relation to this WhatsApp group are therefore being considered through a safeguarding lens, and the school will take appropriate action where necessary to support and protect all children involved.

The sharing of indecent images is a particularly serious matter and may have legal implications. In addition, the use of derogatory homophobic language is unacceptable and does not reflect the values of respect, kindness and inclusion that we seek to promote within our school community. Keeping children safe in education 2026 makes clear that prejudice-based and discriminatory behaviour should never be dismissed as banter, harmless teasing or part of growing up, and that such behaviour can have a significant impact on children's wellbeing and sense of safety.

Parents and carers should also be aware that Keeping children safe in education 2026 contains specific guidance regarding the sharing of nude or semi-nude images and videos by children. Such

incidents require careful safeguarding consideration and, where appropriate, may involve external agencies, including the police.

We have advised children that content shared online, including messages, images and comments, can often be traced back to the devices and accounts from which they were sent. Online activity leaves a digital footprint, and in serious cases social media providers and the police may be able to assist in investigations.

We would like to remind parents and carers of their responsibility to help keep children safe online. This includes monitoring the use of apps, messaging services and social media platforms, ensuring that children understand the importance of respectful communication, and taking appropriate action if concerns arise.

We ask that you speak with your child about their online activity and reinforce the importance of:

- Treating others with kindness and respect.
- Never sharing images of themselves or others without permission.
- Never sharing indecent, inappropriate or offensive content.
- Reporting any concerns immediately to a trusted adult.
- Using respectful language and understanding that discriminatory, homophobic or abusive language is unacceptable.

We would also encourage parents and carers to regularly monitor their child's access to messaging groups and to discuss safe and responsible online behaviour. If you become aware that your child has shared inappropriate content or contributed to harmful conversations, please take immediate steps to remove the content where possible and ensure that the behaviour does not continue.

We are asking for your support and partnership in addressing this matter, as the incidents concerned have taken place outside of school. By working together, we can help ensure that all children remain safe and respectful in their interactions both online and offline.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Lupton (Deputy Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead)

Hannach Child (Assistant Headteacher and Y6 Class Teacher)

Jonny Duthoit (Year 6 Class Teacher)