



# E – Safety Information

Social Media Apps

## Use of social media among young people

It's no secret that social media is the preferred way of keeping in touch for many young people. The ability to contact friends and share special moments can be enjoyable and fun. However, with this comes a range of problems which can threaten children's safety and wellbeing.

A recent article showed that young people are increasingly moving away from mainstream apps such as Facebook and Twitter.

*According to the latest GlobalWebIndex report, the percentage of teens active on Facebook dropped by 9 per cent during 2013. Falls were also recorded for YouTube (7 per cent), Twitter (3 per cent) and Google+ (4 per cent)... At the same time, the report, based on interviews with 170,000 users in 32 counties, detected a rise in newer social networks like Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr, along with mobile messaging services.*

*(The Telegraph, 25 April 2014)*

As adults, it is important that we understand how our young people are using technology and social media so that we can advise and assist them in using them safely.

On 28 November 2014, a survey was carried out with Year 7 students to find out which were the most commonly used social media apps. We have put together a brief guide to the apps that our students use. We would also encourage you to try out these apps for yourself.

For more detailed guides to some of the most popular apps you can visit [www.connectsafely.org](http://www.connectsafely.org) and explore the "Guides" section.

Thank you for your support.

## Facebook



Facebook is one of the most widely used social media apps. They chat, share photos (more than 250 million new ones each day!), post videos, stay in touch and share personal news, play games, plan meetings and get-togethers, send birthday and holiday wishes, do homework and business together, find and contact long-lost friends and relatives, review books and recommend restaurants, support charitable causes....

In fact, there's very little people can't do on Facebook.

**Privacy settings:** By default, Facebook prefers you to share as much of your information as you can. Therefore users need to be very careful to check that their privacy settings are as strict as possible, limiting access to "Friends Only." Look for the Padlock icon.

**Friend Requests:** There can be competition for young people to appear to have lots of "friends", making it common to accept all friend requests regardless of whether they know the person. Facebook says that the average number of genuine friends and acquaintances is around 200. If your child has significantly more than this, they may need to consider who those people are.

**Monitoring:** If you haven't already, consider creating your own account on Facebook so you can "friend" your child. That's probably the best "monitoring tool" you could use. If you and your child do become Facebook friends – resist the temptation to make public comments on their pages; that might embarrass them, which can create an unwanted communication barrier between you and your child. Another approach some parents take is to require that they know all their children's passwords.

## Facetime, Skype



Facetime allows two users to video call each other between Apple devices. Other brands (HTC, Samsung) have similar equivalents.

**Calling:** Users can call each other using their email address or phone number. The other person can opt not to accept the call.

**Supervision:** It is not advised to allow children to use video messaging in bedrooms. FaceTime has a recent chats section. This will tell you when your child was video chatting, how long for and and who with, but this can be deleted. If your child is spending lots of time chatting on Facetime, but the call log does not tally you may need to investigate further.

## Texts, iMessage, WhatsApp



**iMessage** (or Messages as it is also called) is a simple text chat that uses email to send a message. If someone knows your email address, they can message you. SMS messages can be sent to your phone via your telephone number. Texts and iMessage can include images and videos.

**Identification:** The senders of message sent in this way are not always easily identified. Telephone numbers are anonymous and can be withheld and email addresses often do not include the sender's name. Children should never share their telephone number or personal email address to anyone they do not trust.

**Blocking:** The easiest way to combat any unsolicited or offensive messages is to block the sender. Responding to these kinds of messages is inflammatory, and often plays into the hands of the aggressor.

**Notifications:** Instant messaging is used widely and can be very distracting to any other activity at hand, be it lesson time or family time. Use your devices settings to turn off sound and visual notifications when you are busy doing something else. Many devices also have a 'Do Not Disturb' feature, which stops all notifications flashing up during certain hours. This is particularly useful at night.

## Snapchat



One of the most popular apps among WLA students. Snapchat allows users to send pictures or short videos which are displayed for up to 10 seconds when opened. The popularity of this app surrounds the idea that things on the internet last forever, whereas on Snapchat, your silly photo will self-destruct!

**Inhibitions:** the selling point of Snapchat is also one of its dangers, in that users can lose their inhibitions. Young people may feel more confident to send inappropriate or abusive images as they believe that there will be no record of it. Snapchat is often linked to sexting. However, images can be fairly easily screen captured. The sender will be notified if the recipient screen captures their Snapchat message.

**Limit senders:** users do have the option to restrict the people who can send them Snapchat messages, and the app has a Block button.

**Adding friends:** To add a friend on Snapchat you need to know their username, you cannot search or browse for friends. It's advisable to choose an unusual username that people would not easily guess, to avoid unwanted friend requests

## Instagram



Instagram allows users to edit, enhance and add interesting effects to their photos then share them with their 'followers'. Followers can then "Like" and comment on the images. Younger users sometimes compete for the most "Likes", which can lead to users posting controversial images to get themselves noticed.

**Sharing:** your account is set to be public by default, but users can limit who can see their posts, and can also approve or deny requests to follow the account.

**Be aware:** Young people need to be aware that even if they themselves don't have an Instagram account, people can still post images of them without their knowledge. They need to be aware of this when agreeing to be in photos or "selfies". If you discover a picture of yourself that you do not wish to be online, you can ask the poster to delete it or report the image as inappropriate.

## Oovoo



You can use Oovoo to video chat with up to 12 people at once. A concern about Oovoo, is that users can sometimes leave the camera running as they do other things and can forget that it is switched on. This effectively allows strangers to observe you in the privacy of your home!

**Contacts:** it is important to set your profile so that you can only be found by someone typing in your exact username or email address, not by people generally searching or browsing for new friends. Using an anonymous username is useful. Never video chat with someone you do not know.

**Privacy:** don't use video messaging unless you are actually talking to someone and end the call when you are finished.