

E-Safety Bulletin @

Ludlow Junior School

Welcome to the first of our new half-termly bulletins on E-safety which will look to unpick different applications and online resources your children might be exposed to or begin using in the near distant future. At Ludlow Junior, we are committed to keeping all children safe and aware of the vulnerabilities of using online resources. Each bulletin will not only highlight the benefits and potential dangers of an application/online program but will also give handy hints and tips as to how you can monitor and talk to your children about them.

The reason for these half-termly bulletins is not so that we are in fear of what our children might be looking at or who they might be communicating to online, but it is to open up an informed dialogue between you and your child, so they feel comfortable with discussing what they are doing online and making them more internet aware.

Snapchat

Snapchat is a photo sharing app which enables users to share images, videos and chat with friends. The app allows users to either share photos or videos directly to their friends for a short period of time or to their 'story' which will document a users last 24 hours. It is a great way for friends to keep up to date with what they are doing. In a study, Snapchat was found to have the 4th biggest negative impact on children's mental health. Children believe they can use the app to make themselves 'look pretty'.

Even though Snapchat has an age limit on it of 13 years old, it is easy for children to gain access to it, use older siblings accounts or just be exposed to it from friends at school. For this reason it is vital for us to look at what it does and any potential threats it could cause to our children.

What are the Dangers?

Exposing your child's exact location

The 'Snap Map' lets you share your Exact location in real-time through a map on the app. When the app is opened on a device, the users location will update. There is also a risk of your child's location to be exposed if they were to upload a picture to the 'Our Story' feature. There is a warning before adding a picture or video that it will be added to the 'Snap Map' in your current location no matter what your location preferences are.



Screenshots and saved messages

Whilst Snapchat's gimmick is that all photos, videos and messages disappear eventually, users still have the ability to take screenshot or record what has been sent to them. Users can often forget that this is possible in the app and send compromising or emotional information to somebody that they think they can trust. They may also accidentally send a message to someone they don't trust. Simply by pressing and holding down an image can allow a user to save what has been sent to them which has the potential to be used against someone in the future. This has a major link to online bullying where a photo or message might be sent by a child to someone they trust, but then has been passed on to people who mean harm.

Addiction

Snapchat has a feature called 'Snapstreaks' where friends can gain a streak when snaps have been sent back and forth consecutively. The longer that snaps are sent between friends the higher the streak. Snapchat also rewards users who gain high streaks through gifting emojis and 'filters' giving an incentive for users to use the app and keep streaks. Children want to invest their time into making their streaks last which can also put added pressures onto friendships.

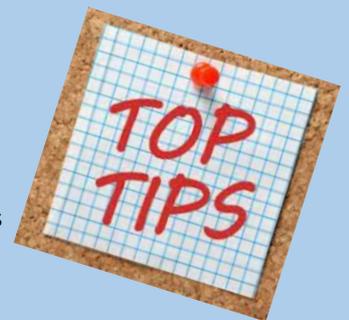
Body Image

Snapchat allows users to change the way they look through the use of filters. Through the use of questionnaires, children have noted that this has given them a negative attitude about their own body or face, saying that they 'need to add a filter' in order to look okay. This can affect children's mental health as they can grow up thinking that the way they are is not okay which is just not true.

Should we just stop our children from using it?

Ultimately, it is your choice as a parent to allow your child to use or not use Snapchat. Outlined above are some of the worries that could prevent you from letting your child use snapchat. However, if you have a secure understanding of how the app works and what dangers there are, then as a parent you are in a great position to educate and inform your child. Below are some top tips that you may want to take up if you're in the position of allowing your child to use the app.

Mr Palmer's Top Tips to stay Safe!



- **Discuss the risks** – Having an open dialogue with your child is the best thing you can always do when concerned about them using any app. If you start the open dialogue about apps at an early age with them it can be a tool that you can rely on, not just for Snapchat but for wider problems they face and will build up a trust and respect they will have for you. With this, they will be more likely to come to you if they see or send anything on Snapchat they are worried about rather than you having to talk to them.
- **Talk about the Filters**—Talk to your child and explore the filters they are using with them. Create positivity through this dialogue by letting them know that filters can be fun to change the way they look but they do not make themselves look 'better'.
- **Use 'Ghost Mode'** – This is a fantastic feature that stops the app from sharing a user's location so your child will no longer be visible to anyone on the 'Snap Map'. To enable this, go onto the 'Snap Map' and tap the cog in the top-right corner. Here, you can change the setting to 'Ghost Mode'.
- **Restrict story views** – In settings, you can restrict who can look at the photos or videos you upload to 'My Story'. There are three options to choose from; Custom, My Friends, Anyone. I suggest to keep it to just 'My Friends' and you may want to check these settings when you log back in or set it up.
- **Turn off 'Quick Add'** – This is the app's feature to help friends find each other on the app. This is based on mutual friends or if their number is in their phone book. Explain to your child that this feature can lead them to being open to strangers. To turn this off, go to the settings.

I hope you have found this first newsletter interesting and helpful. If you have any more concerns or questions about Snapchat then please do email info@ludlowjunior.org.uk and it will be passed onto myself. Also email if you have any other concerns or would like information about other apps and websites your child might be using. Thank you for taking the time to read this! Happy Computing!

Mr Palmer
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