

We have been informed that a number of children from Queensmead Primary Academy have Facebook profiles even though the permitted minimum age to use the site is 13, according to the sites terms and conditions.

Our academy is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the Internet and as such we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern. Whilst children cannot access Facebook at school, they could have access to it on any other computer or portable electronic device such as a smart phone. Websites such as Facebook offer amazing communication and social connections, **however** they are created with their audience in mind and this is specifically over 13 years old.

Possible risks for children under 13 using the site may include:

- Facebook use “age targeted” advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other inappropriate nature, depending on the age they stated when they registered
- Children may accept friend requests from people they don’t know in real life which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on Facebook is not moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children
- Photographs shared by users are not checked and therefore children could be exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identities private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options
- Facebook could be exploited by bullies and for other inappropriate contact
- Facebook cannot and does not verify its members therefore it is important to remember that if your child can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else!

We feel it important to point out to parents the risks of underage use of such sites, so you can make an informed decision as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not. These profiles will have been created away from school and sometimes by a child, their friends, siblings or even parents. We will take action (such as reporting under aged profiles) if a problem comes to our attention that involves the safety or wellbeing of any of our children.

Should you decide to allow your child to have a Facebook profile we strongly advise you:

- Check their profile is set to private and that only friends can see information that is posted
- Monitor your child’s use and talk to them about safe and appropriate online behaviour such as not sharing personal information and not posting offensive messages or photos
- **Install the CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) application** from www.facebook.com/clickceop on their profile. This places a bookmark on their profile to CEOP and the Report Abuse button which has been known to deter offenders
- Have a look at the advice for parents/carers from Facebook www.facebook.com/help/?safety=parents
- Set up your own profile so you understand how the site works and ask them to have you as a friend on their profile so you know what they are posting online

Make sure your child understands the following rules:

- Always keep your profile private
- Never accept friends you don’t know in real life
- Never post anything which could reveal your identity
- Never post anything you wouldn’t want your parents to see
- Never agree to meet somebody you only know online without telling a trusted adult
- Always tell someone if you feel threatened or someone upsets you