Social Media – What you need to know!

Dear Parents and Carers,

The following document has been created to help give you information about the variety of social media apps and websites that your child/children may be using on their personal mobile device/ tables or games console. The information is accurate as of June 2017 and should give you some of the basic information you need to have an awareness of you child's potential online activity.
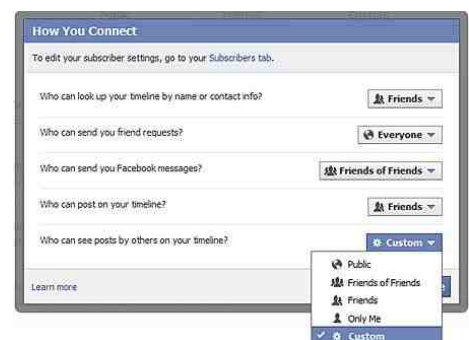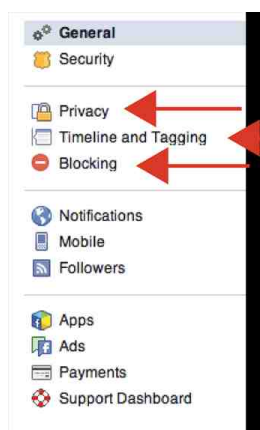
Facebook

Facebook is a very popular social-networking site where users can connect with each other from all over the globe. Whilst Facebook is recommended for users aged 13 and above, it is incredibly easy to create your very own Facebook account and to begin share thoughts; posting pictures and videos and connecting with other people through a mobile or tablet device. Facebook also allows people to 'instant message' each other either individually or through a 'group chat'.

Unless an account is set to private, any body is able to view, comment, like or share anything that you or your child posts online. Potentially, this can have a negative impact as you no longer have control over who sees the content that you share on Facebook. Additionally, depending on the amount of information you submit to Facebook, people can then see any of this information. This includes your age, location, religion, interest and other friends.

Whilst we recognise that Facebook is a fantastic social networking too for millions of people around the World. This is rate as unsuitable for children at primary school age and should not be using this app. However, there are thorough content privacy settings that can be used to help ensure your child's online safety.
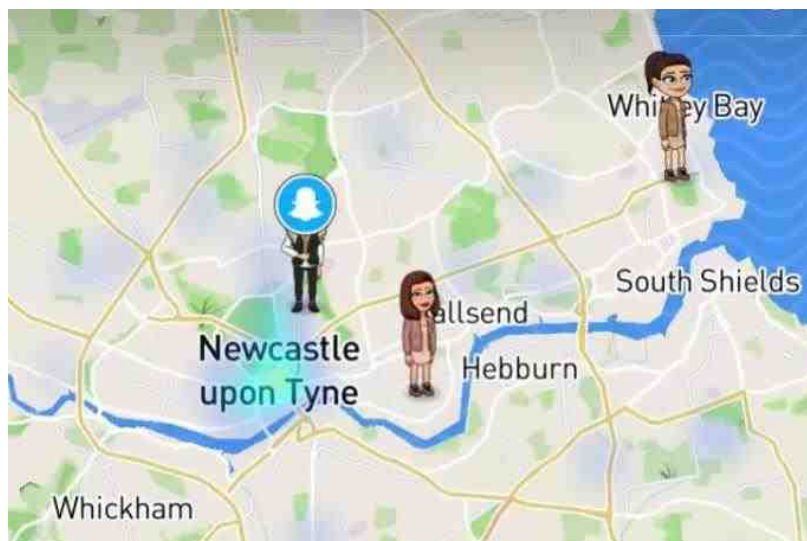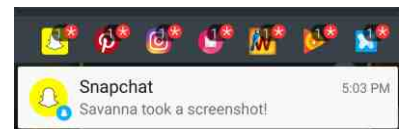
Snapchat

Snapchat is quickly becoming one of the most popular ways for young people to communicate with each other through social media. Snapchat works through people taking a photo of themselves and sending it to someone else or a group of people, with a message if desired. The novelty with Snapchat is that the people receiving these pictures can only view them for a maximum of 10 seconds before the picture disappears and is deleted forever. However, recipients do have the option of taking a 'screenshot' of any pictures they receive.

Whilst the vast majority of young people use Snapchat to exchange amusing pictures and videos, the app has gained a reputation as a 'sexting' app. This is because some users are exchanging sexually inappropriate content without the images being stored on a device. Snapchat is recommended for users aged 16 and above. However, user do have complete control over who they are sending their pictures and videos too. Therefore it is important that discussions are had with children about the awareness of sending inappropriate images and videos to other users. However, the children do not have control over who they receive 'snaps' from. There is a privacy setting available on this app that allows you to block receiving 'snaps' from any body that is not you contact.

Musical.ly

Musical.ly is becoming increasingly popular amongst young people. This app allows users to video themselves singing along to popular songs. They are then able to share these videos using hashtages (#). Users can also browse through other people's videos. Whilst we recognise that the use of Musical.ly can be great fun for young users there are potential threats within this app. Due to the nature of chart music, a lot of lyrics does contain explicit and sexual language that the children are exposed to. Unfortunaty, there are no privacy or filtering settings in place in order the prevent users from being exposed to any of this innapropriate material.

As a result, Musical.ly is deemed as appropriate for children aged 16 and above. There are some privacy settings available on Musical.ly. We strongly recommend that you have a discussion with your child/children about the implementation of these privacy settings. This is because videos that are posted share an inviduals location.
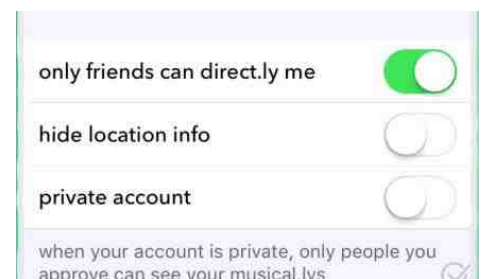
➢ Film yourself singing to popular songs
➢ Share these videos with other users
➢ Browse other people's creations (using the hashtag feature)

While the Federation recognises how much fun children have with this app, we would like to ensure that parents and carers and aware of the some of the risks the children could face.

1. **Explicit language** – As many of you are aware, a large portion of today's chart music contains extremely explicit language. Through this Musical.ly app, the children have full access to listen to these songs and this is to be regarded as a safeguarding issue.
2. **Inappropriate material and themes** – Many of the songs **and videos** that are available on Musical.ly relate to inappropriate themes for children of primary school age, most commonly sexual content. It is important to remember that the children will be reading the lyrics and singing along to these songs which contain these inappropriate themes.
3. **Other Users** – The recommended age usage for Musical.ly is 16 and over. This means that the majority of users on the app are much older than the children of our school. As a result, the children are being exposed to adult users, who may also be using inappropriate language and themes.

Privacy Settings

The Leamington Federation wants all children to have fun and enjoy the wonders of social media. While we understand that it may be difficult to govern the children using Musical.ly, we want to ensure that all the children are aware of being **safe** whilst using the app. Many of the children and adults may be unaware that the app actually shares the location of the user when they post a video online and they are free to be viewed by anyone, anywhere in the World. It also allows users to send direct messages to one another. However, there are privacy settings available for Musical.ly that enables the children to hide their location, only their friends can message them (direct.ly) and that only approved friends can view their profile and videos.

We would like to encourage all parents to have a conversation with their child about the use of Musical.ly and how they can stay safe whilst using the app. If you would like to find out more about this app or any other issues that may concern you we recommend you visit:
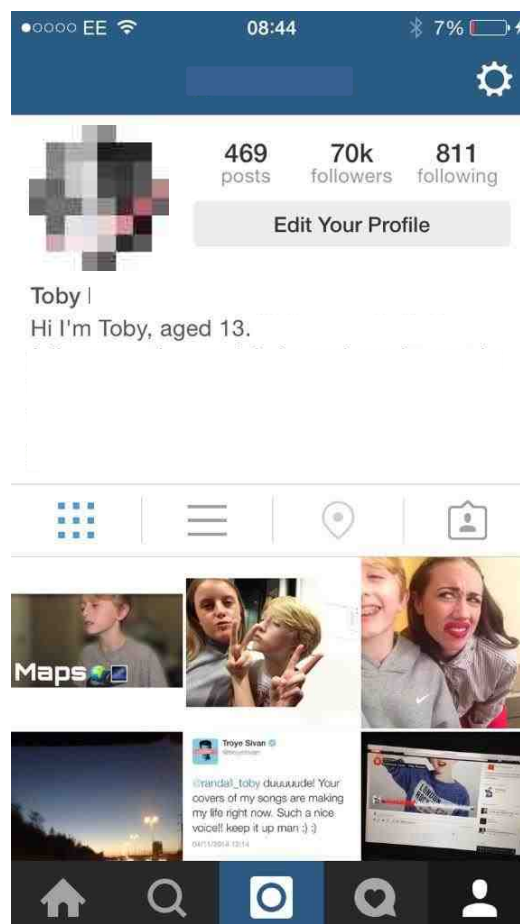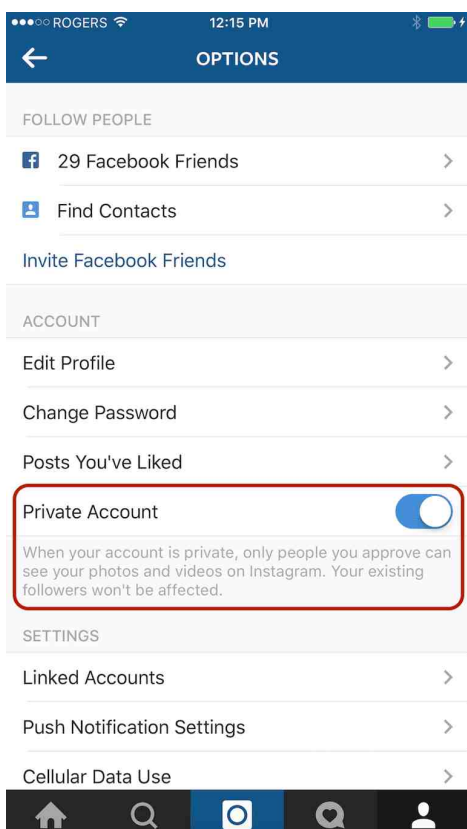
Instagram

Instagram is an increasingly popular form of social media. This app allows users to post pictures of them to share with other users all around the World. The novelty of this app is that users can edit and 'Photoshop' their picture in a large variety of ways.

The Leamington Federation is aware that many children have their own Instagram account or has access to one. Many parents may not be aware that this app can also be used on iPad or tablet, not just on a mobile device. Whilst this app is incredibly popular, it is designed for people over the age of 13.

However, there are possible threats that children face whilst using this app.

1. **Viewing inappropriate images** – on Instagram there is a wide variety of images that children can view. The children can search different 'hashtags', which will lead them to a whole host of images that people have posted. As a consequence, it is incredibly easy for children to view images of an inappropriate natures such as pornography, racism or extremism.
2. **People viewing their images –** Children may feel that there is no harm in posting images of themselves on Instagram. However, through this same use of 'hashtags', children may be putting themselves at risk by allowing other individuals to view their images through searching.
3. **Instant messaging –** Instagram allows users to message each other privately. As such, this does allow people to contact children and create a conversation with them. There is a real danger of 'Catfishing' on Instagram, which is a large threat to our children.

If children are going to have an Instagram account, they *must* ensure that they change their profile to private. As a result, it means that people who are not pre-approved friends cannot view any of their pictures. Additionally, people who are not pre-approved friends cannot directly contact and message them.

What is Catfishing?

Catfishing is when somebody creates a fake profile on a social media account and masquerades as somebody they are not. Their intentions may not be to harm others and is allowing them to express themselves in a way they cannot in their everyday life.

However, there have been incidents where individuals have created these online accounts using other pictures they have found on the internet, in an effort to speak to children. This is something that children should be highly aware of and should remain vigilant.