



Welcome!

Welcome to Witham St Hughs Academy's Safeguarding Newsletter. Keeping children safe is of course, our key priority here at school. Safeguarding takes many forms including: Protecting children from harm; preventing impairment of children's health and development; enabling safe and effective parenting and giving children equal opportunities in life. We do many things every day in school to ensure pupils are safe including: ensuring all staff are trained in safeguarding; having clear policies and procedures in place to keep children safe; monitoring pupil attendance; ensuring a safe and healthy site; ensuring the behaviour of pupils is in line with the Academy behaviour policy and using our curriculum to teach children about risk taking, diversity, healthy lifestyles, managing relationships, online safety and much more. Our safeguarding policy is always available to view via our website.



Focus on: Walking alone

As we move towards the lighter evenings and the (hopefully!) warmer weather, more children may be walking to and from school alone. At Witham St Hughs Academy, this only happens with signed permission from a parent or guardian and only for pupils in Years 5 & 6. Some families do give these pupils permission to supervise younger siblings to and from school. If this is the case, parents/carers must be confident that the below apply:

- Older siblings are confident and competent to supervise younger siblings on the walk.
- All children walking alone are able to cross roads safely.
- Older and younger siblings stay walking together all the way home, and do not break off into groups.
- Children walking home alone are still representing our Academy, and will be respectful members of the community at these times.
- If older pupils have mobile phones, they are used responsibly and do not cause any distraction that could compromise their, or others' safety.

Focus on: Playing out

As we head into spring, children will of course be playing outside more and more—what great news! When to allow your child 'out' to play without direct adult supervision is a topic of discussion amongst many parents and carers. This is clearly dependent on many factors including the maturity and responsibility of the child, the safety of the area in which they will be playing, as well as parental perception of risk. It is also important to consider whether your child has access to technology, such as a phone, in order to call for help if needed. It is worth noting, that access to a mobile phone is not a substitute for adequate parental supervision or understanding of the risks of playing unsupervised. A study by The British Children's Play Survey found that the average age a child was allowed to play outside alone was 10.7 years. It is a careful balance to strike between encouraging outdoor play and child safety, and we know as a school this is something parents will carefully be considering over the coming weeks and months. As an Academy, we will be talking to pupils in the coming weeks about the importance of representing our Academy and themselves, positively whilst in the community. We are aware of how closely-knit the community in Witham can be, and are keen that children from our school are seen as positive citizens by our wider community. As always, if you need any further support, please let us know.



Who can help?

Every school has a 'Designated Safeguarding Lead'. At Witham St Hughs Academy, these are: Richard Stock, Emily Broadley, Hannah Younger and Michelle Dexter. Our safeguarding governor is Marcus Capell. If you have any concerns in relation to a safeguarding, please feel free to speak to a safeguarding lead at any time.

Useful phone numbers

Social Services: 01522 782111
ChildLine: 0800 1111
Lincolnshire Prevent Team: 020 7340 7264
Young Carers Helpline: 01522 553275
NSPCC whistle blowing helpline: 08088 005000
FGM helpline: 08000 283550
Samaritans: 01522 528282
Family Services Directory: 0800 195 1635

Online Safety: WhatsApp

WhatsApp has a minimum age restriction of 16. This means that the app developers, alongside online regulators, believe this is the youngest appropriate age to use this app. As an Academy, we of course firmly agree with this judgement, and this is the messaging pupils receive from our teaching team. WhatsApp is a social media platform, not simply a messaging service.



We do however, understand that some of our older pupils do have access to this app and use it on a regular basis. Through this newsletter previously, we have shared a range of parental advice and controls concerning the use of WhatsApp. In this newsletter we would like to take the opportunity to remind parents and carers that any use of social media by children should be closely monitored by adults to ensure children are behaving appropriately and safely online, in the same way we ensure this in school and at home offline.

There have already been several incidents in school this year in which unacceptable pupil behaviour on WhatsApp has needed to be dealt with by adults in school. Whilst the staff team are always there to support pupil wellbeing and guide conflict resolution, issues arising from WhatsApp can take several hours across multiple days to resolve. As a school, we would far rather be using this time to benefit the teaching and learning of our pupils and we know that parents would rather this be the case too.

Below are some links to parental guidance and support for WhatsApp should parents choose to allow their children to use this platform. Our advice remains firmly in line with the regulators - this is a social media platform, and is not suitable for users under the age of 16.

<https://withamsthughssacademy.co.uk/content/uploads/sites/24/2024/06/Whatsapp.pdf>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/whatsapp-safety-a-how-to-guide-for-parents/>

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/blog/helping-your-child-with-whatsapp>