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Dear Parents

We regularly write to all our parents – no matter which class your child is in – about the importance of E safety. It is something we take very seriously at St Michael's and we know that it can affect everyone in the family. E-safety is an integral part of children's education in today's digital world and is embedded in their learning at school. We also want to help our parents and children improve their own understanding of e-safety issues so the children can learn to use the internet and all digital media in a safe and secure way.

Staying up to date with all the latest cyber changes and developments is often difficult for parents – but it is essential in order to keep our children safe when they are online. As you are well aware, the exposure to various social media software, apps, websites, online games and other media is ever growing. As a result, in school, we are spending an increasing amount of time investigating potential eSafety risks. In particular, more recently there has been a rise in the number of concerns we have had in relation to **WhatsApp**. What's App is a free text and photo messaging app designed for people aged 16+; this means that none of our children should be using it.

We have also been made aware of a safeguarding risk relating to the popular game "Fortnite" which we would like to draw your attention to. This relates to how the children use the voice and text chat function when playing the game and its potential for child grooming. Fortnite has an age rating of 12 due to the: *'frequent scenes of mild violence. It is not suitable for persons under 12 years of age'*. This age rating only takes into account the content in the game and not the contact element, where players may be exposed to swearing and offensive language from strangers in the voice or on-screen text chat.

Some wrist watches now have the function of taking photographs. Please note that these watches are **not allowed** in school because some children are using them to take photographs of other children.

We understand that there is only so much control we have on what the children access at home but we urge you to be extra vigilant of your child's use of social media in its many different and ever growing forms. If you consent to your child using some of the apps, it would be advisable to monitor these regularly to make sure that your child is not exposed to anything untoward. Additional information about WhatsApp (and other apps) can be found here: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/whatsapp/>

Please do let us know if you have any questions on keeping our children safe online – either at home or school.

Yours sincerely

S Duncan