**St Mark’s Catholic School**

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**Online safety and communication**

Dear Parents and Carers,

At St. Mark’s we value the importance of effective partnership with parents and will endeavour to keep you informed regarding school events and other information that may be useful for you. I am writing to remind you that the majority of letters from school are now sent electronically to parents via Schoolcomms as an email.  If you have not been receiving emails please check your spam/junk folder and if there are no emails please send into school an updated email address and mobile number. If you are still having difficulties contact onlinereporting@st-marks.hounslow.sch.uk.

School Gateway is used for payments such as dinner money, school trips and textbooks. If you download the App we can send you free messages such as emergency school closures.

**WhatsApp**

WhatsApp is an application used by many young people for messaging. It is popular because groups can be set up easily and images, videos and messages can be sent without cost. One concern with this is that young people can be added to a group that includes people that they do not know, and this can put them in a vulnerable position. WhatsApp has recently raised their age limit from 13 to **16 years** of age due to the new EU Data Protection Act (GDPR May 2018). This is because WhatsApp collects information on users and they need parental permission to do this for children under the age of 16. All pupils have been informed about the age limit in assemblies on 20th and 21st November. We have been made aware that some pupils have been using WhatsApp to create groups linked with school. Pupils have been informed that we do not condone this and will not tolerate the use of WhatsApp for groups linked with school in any way.

For guidance and further information regarding Online Safety the following may be useful:

‘Your guide to the social networks your kids use’: <https://www.net-aware.org.uk>

**CEOPS** – this is an organisation linked directly to the police where you can report online concerns. There are useful resources for parents via this link: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Ms A Waugh-Lucas

Headteacher

