

WATLING STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL

24th February 2016

Dear families,

We have received details from the Local Authority about a new app that young people are beginning to use called "Hangouts".

It is an app for communicating with friends, similar to apps such as "Whatsapp". In it users can send messages and use video and voice calls with up to ten people at any one time. In order to use it users must have a Google + account to log in and then they can launch the app. Users can use the app on both Apple and Android devices, as well as a computer.

The worrying aspect for our young people is that not only can they add their friends, but also they can easily search for anyone they like and similarly, they can be searched for too. The very nature of the app allowing users to randomly search for any name or to be searched; means that they can easily be targeted by unscrupulous individuals that may want to contact your child for very different reasons.

The app asks to be allowed access to the phone's contacts, which immediately then allows everyone else to see those contacts too. We are constantly reminding our children to lock such things down, but unfortunately most don't. To use Google + and therefore Hangouts; children must be 13, however we know that children are accessing these apps before they reach that age.

We would like to make parents and carers aware of this problem as there has already been an incident where an older person contacted a young child in Walsall via this app. We cannot stress how dangerous this app could potentially be.

We urge parents to talk with their children about the dangers of using this app and recommend that the usual regular checks and conversations take place to monitor your child's internet and mobile phone safety.

Yours sincerely,

MRS L POWELL
HEADTEACHER