5<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Dear Parent/Carers,

I am writing to you to make you aware of a new feature on the social networking site, Snapchat.
The smartphone app "Snapchat", which is very popular amongst students, has released an update called "Snap Map" which allows the user's location to be shared among "friends". This feature broadcasts the exact location to "friends" on a map, which is accurate enough to determine the location of the user. This information is enough to build up a picture of where you live, your travel route and where you go to school. **This is a serious safeguarding concern for children.**
The intended use of this feature is to allow friends to meet, examples of this are to meet at points of interests or at a restaurant. However, users can add people that they have never met before. By default, location sharing is off for users, but users are prompted to share their location to "friends" or to selected friends when the feature is launched.

*Switching off Location Sharing on Snapchat:*

- *In the Photo mode, pinch the screen to open "Snap Map"*
- *Tap the cog in the top right of the screen*
- *Tap "Ghost Mode" to turn off location sharing*

**Snapchat Restrictions**

The minimum age requirement is 13 + .Those between the ages of 13 and 17 are required to have parent consent and those under 13 should be directed to the more child friendly "Snapkidz" app. Risks arise from the user being lulled in to a false sense of security in believing their photos disappear when the reality is that photos can still hang around via a screenshot.  The recipient taking a screenshot renders the photo just as permanent as any other photo online.  Whilst Snapchat does endeavour to inform the user when a Snapchat message has been screenshot, there is little that can be done to ensure the privacy of that photo. There is also no way of knowing if a photograph of the original photograph has taken with another device.

If your child uses Snapchat, please have a conversation with them and ensure that they are using the app safely. It is always useful to know your child's password for their phone and individual passcodes for apps.  If you would like more information on social media safety and parental guidance, please visit the following website: www.parentzone.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

*Annette Szymaniak*

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