



21<sup>st</sup> October 2022

E-safety Newsletter Autumn term Oct 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we head into the half-term holidays, we hope that our children and their families are looking forward to having a good rest and lots of fun. We know that for our children they will be enjoying having the time to explore and interact with their virtual social world and it's great to hear that our pupils are becoming more aware and mature in their internet use.

Please keep up those conversations discussing with your children about what they are seeing, hearing and learning online in their virtual world so that they feel able to share with you anything that they come across that may concern them.

Particularly across the Halloween period, young people may see frightening content and encounter peer pressure to undertake harmful online challenges. Find out more about the Essex [online safety campaign](#).

I have also attached a poster with some information about a new trend, you may have heard your children talking about, called BEREAL. This app is very appealing to young people but poses many risks, particularly to children who are socially vulnerable and easily influenced.

Along with this poster, you will find a poster with a QR code for a free E-safety information app for parents and carers. They have lots of great advice and posters like the one attached, to help us adults keep up with the latest online trends and dangers.

If your child has expressed concerns, that you would like advice or support to address, please do not hesitate to let us know; we will be more than happy to support and advise you or signpost you to further advisory services.

I hope that you and your children have a lovely and safe half term holiday exploring all the positive and safe experiences you can have in the virtual world as well as the real world.

Yours sincerely

Sharyn Ailara, Deputy Head Teacher  
*BSc (Hons), PGCE, SENDCo Accreditation*

## What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# BEREAL

BeReal is the latest trending social media app. The concept is that people see others in their authentic day-to-day lives, sharing candid photos without editing or applying filters. Each day at a random time, users are simultaneously notified to take a picture of what they're doing at that exact moment. The two-minute window to submit an image means there's no time to select a particularly glamorous or exciting activity. BeReal shares two pictures: a selfie, and an image of the immediate surroundings. Users can only view and react to their friends' photos once they upload their own.

AGGRAVATING

13+  
From the App Store & Google Play

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

#### CONTINUOUS NOTIFICATIONS

Like any social media app, BeReal's developers want users to be on it regularly and scrolling for long periods. BeReal only sends one notification to post a picture each day, but there are other alerts for events such as mentions, comments, friend requests and reactions to your photo. This can cause young users to feel pressure to open the app and respond, distracting them from other activities.

#### CONNECTING WITH STRANGERS

When someone signs up to BeReal, it highlights anyone in their phone's contacts list who already has the app – so users can connect with friends, or invite others from their contacts. The 'Discovery' feed, meanwhile, shows posts from strangers and gives users the option to add them as friends, too. This means your child could potentially connect with – and communicate with – a stranger.

#### PUBLIC SHARING

As well as sharing posts with friends in the moment, the app also allows posts to be shared publicly and public content to be viewed. Before a user can see this public content, they must post their own photo first. Unfortunately, there currently seems to be a lack of moderation on the content that's being uploaded, so a young user could be exposed to posts which aren't suitable for their age.

#### LIMIT NOTIFICATIONS

BeReal offers the option to turn off individual types of notification. Doing this will significantly reduce the number of times your child is tempted to open the app by incoming comments, uploads, friend requests and so on. Ironically, it will allow them to actually 'be real' by being present in the moment and their current environment as opposed to being engrossed on social media.

#### STOP AND THINK

BeReal's goal is for users to be authentic with friends, removing the pressure of that flawless photo or perfectly worded post. It's still vital, though, that children stop and think rather than uploading something risky just to meet the two-minute deadline. Point out to them what kind of information strangers could extract from an image: school crests, street names or local landmarks, for example.

#### EASY LOCATION

BeReal's default setting is to share the exact location of where a post was sent from. Given that images are usually shared within the two-minute window, anyone your child is friends with on the app will know exactly where they are (or at least, where they were two minutes earlier). As we've noted, this could include strangers who are intending to use this geographical information for malicious purposes.

#### VISIBLE PERSONAL DATA

As with any other form of social media, it's important that your child doesn't share too much personal information on their profile. BeReal allows for a photo, full name, approximate location and a short bio. It's safest to make sure that your child's profile doesn't display anything which could identify where they go to school or exactly where they live.

#### REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE

What your child says and does online – their digital footprint – shapes the way that other people see them. It's essential that young people understand that when they post something online, they are giving the app in question the right to do whatever they wish with that image or content, including sharing it elsewhere. This form of permission is explicitly referenced in BeReal's terms of use.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

#### KEEP IT AMONG FRIENDS

Remind your child why adding strangers to their contacts isn't a good idea, and advise them to decline any friend requests from people they don't know in real life. If something your child sees on BeReal makes them feel uncomfortable, they can report it by clicking on the three dots in the top right. The reporting tool allows them to state the reason that they're flagging up the post.

#### CREATE A SAFE PROFILE

Remind your child to use an avatar as their profile pic (as opposed to a photo of themselves) and use a nickname or just their first name, not their full name. Any information they add to their bio (which is optional) should be kept vague, and personal details should remain private. It's also worth turning off the geolocation feature either through the device's settings or in BeReal itself.

### Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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National  
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# Download your Free Online Safety App for Parents & Carers



Be #OnlineSafetySavvy

Keep up with the latest apps  
games and tech your children  
are using, with the worlds  
most comprehensive online  
safety app for parents.

## On the National Online Safety app you'll find:

- ✓ Hundreds of online safety guides on the topics you need to know about – from screen addiction, fake news and trolling to hacking, social media influencers and sexting;
- ✓ An online safety training course for parents – developed by our experts and delivered by online safety ambassador Mylene Klass;
- ✓ A user-friendly interface with increased functionality – find exactly what you need, when you need it;
- ✓ The option to get notifications to your phone as soon as new content becomes available – so you can stay up-to-date with the latest online crazes (and risks);
- ✓ An in-app voting system so you can help determine the subjects you'd like us to cover in future;
- ✓ The facility to personalise your content by favouriting key resources.

## Download the free today



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