



BROOKFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Brookfield Community School

Chatsworth Road

Chesterfield

Derbyshire

S40 3NS

01246 568115

enquiries@brookfieldcs.org.uk

www.brookfieldcs.org.uk

Headteacher: Mr K Hirst

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Dear Parent/Carer

TELEGRAM APP

We are writing to make you aware of information we have received regarding the use of an App called Telegram.

Telegram is a cloud-based instant messaging application that allows users to send messages, make voice and video calls, and share photos, videos and files. It allows users to communicate without providing phone numbers. It has a minimum age restriction of 17+ but we are aware of younger students accessing it.

The information we have received from the Police is that Telegram is being used in Chesterfield for the sharing of information, including the selling of illegal drugs and sharing of harmful images.

Added to this, we are told that a feature of the App is a "People Nearby" function that allows users to find and make contact with others, including strangers nearby. This may be used by scammers, cyberbullies or even predators looking for vulnerable young users to target.

We are making you aware of this as we go into the Summer holidays to ask you to check that your child does not have access to this App on their phone. We have shown the logo for this App at the bottom of this letter so you will be able to easily identify it. Also on the back of this letter is further information.

We will share our messages of staying safe online prior to the Summer with students and continue this work into the Autumn term in order to make students aware of the dangers posed across a range of sources online.

Yours faithfully

Mr M Robinson
Deputy Headteacher/Designated
Safeguarding Lead

Mrs E Buggins
Safeguarding Governor

Telegram App Logo



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

TELEGRAM

AGE RESTRICTION
17+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Telegram isn't new, but it's grown significantly in popularity over recent years, thanks to its secure nature and speedier performance than many of its competitors – including WhatsApp. While Telegram is an excellent app in terms of actual performance, like any messaging platform it brings its own challenges for parents when it comes to feeling confident about children being able to handle their own messaging conversations and contact with the outside world in general. Here's everything that trusted adults need to know about using Telegram safely.

LACK OF AGE RESTRICTION

17+

Telegram has a 16+ age restriction on using the service, while someone is required to be over 17 to actually download the app. Once that's accomplished, however, there's no need to provide further identification. That means there's no guarantee that under 17s aren't using the app – and no way to confidently verify that any other user actually is who they say they are.

POSSIBLE CYBERBULLYING

If your child uses Telegram, they could well be in a group with friends and peers on the app. These groups are managed by admins who can remove the option to post replies – possibly leading to instances of cyberbullying in which the victim has no ability to respond. Messages can be forwarded from groups, too, which potentially opens up images and text being seen by people they weren't intended for.

UNMODERATED CONTENT

Because Telegram relies on users' self-moderation, it can sporadically become a hotbed for illegal or inappropriate content. In the past, the circulation of this material has led to its temporary removal from the App Store. In fairness, the same can be said of several messaging platforms, but Telegram's features (Secret Chats, for instance) certainly present more issues than the likes of WhatsApp.

PREMIUM COSTS

Telegram is free to use, but it also offers a premium membership (£4.99 per month or £35.99 a year) which increases download speeds, adds translation features, and increases channel and account limits. If your child has access to your Apple ID or Google Pay details, they may be able to sign up for the premium package without your knowledge.

UNAUTHORISED ACCESS

One of Telegram's major selling points is that it's accessible across multiple platforms. Once the app's been downloaded, users can log in from a phone, tablet or computer. This multi-device availability means increased opportunities for someone else to gain unauthorised access (if your child leaves a computer or tablet at school logged into their Telegram account, for instance).

SECRET CHATS

Telegram offers a feature called Secret Chats, which allows for messages which self-delete after a specified period of time. There are instances where this can be useful (journalists often use Telegram to protect their sources, for example), but for young people it can make it extremely difficult to prove that someone has been abusive or inappropriate towards them on the app.

Advice for Parents & Carers

PRIVACY CONTROLS

If your child wants to use Telegram, we'd strongly suggest using the app's built-in privacy settings to restrict who can see when they were last online, their profile photo, and their phone number. This can be set to 'everybody', 'my contacts' or 'nobody'; we'd recommend either the second or third options, depending on how locked down you want the platform to be.

DISCUSS SECURITY

It's important that your child understands the merits of strong passwords and logging out of devices when they're finished – and the benefits of protecting their personal data in general. This could range from relaxed chats and simple tips like "don't send your bank details" to how to set up passcodes for Telegram so your child's chats stay secure when they step away from their screen.

REPORT UNSAFE CONTENT

If your child receives private messages which include content that could be considered illegal, unsafe or upsetting, they can of course block the account responsible within the app itself. Be aware, however, that Telegram won't necessarily take any further action unless this offensive content involved a user-created channel, bot or sticker.

USE THE BLOCK FUNCTION

Users can block spam, abusive, or imposter accounts within the app. Blocking stops that account from messaging your child, or viewing their profile and activity. If the user in question is one of your child's peers or friendship circle, it may be worth bringing it to the attention of their school. Also bear in mind that your child can also voluntarily leave a Telegram group at any point if they wish.

PROTECT PAYMENT METHODS

Apple and Google's storefronts offer family sharing options, but it's also worth double-checking your settings to ensure that a password or two-factor authentication option is set up to prevent any unexpected purchases. If your child does pay for a premium Telegram subscription without your consent, Apple and Google have been known to issue refunds in some cases.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is Editor in Chief of gaming and esports site GCRecon and has worked in the gaming media for around four years. A regular visitor to the App Store to try out new tools, he's also a parent who understands the value of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have been published on influential sites including IGN and TechRadar.



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National Online Safety
#WakeupWednesday

Source: <https://www.telegram.org/> | <https://www.engadget.com/telegram-explained-2022-183035088.html>



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