REIGATE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Digital Bulletin – Monkey App

The Monkey app allows children to chat with new people from all over the world. Users are randomly matched with other users for a brief, introductory video call. When matched with a new person, you can add more time or add the person on Snapchat to continue the connection.

Age Restriction

Age verification is there, which is positive. The app verifies age of its users by requiring a Snapchat or Facebook authentication. However, this means that Monkey is relying on the accuracy of the age used create accounts in both of those apps in order to verify ages of its own users. This is a good start, but obviously has ways in which it can be exploited.

Monitoring

Monkey have community guidelines which outline what content is deemed inappropriate, including content that is explicitly sexual, violent, or intended to promote physical or emotional harm to an individual. They then provide users with the opportunity to report anything that they see as being inappropriate through a report button. This is then reviewed within minutes by a review team (of human moderators) which is manned 24/7. Any users that have acted inappropriately, and/or violated the app's community guidelines, are instantly banned from the app.

Monkey also claim to use 'state-of-the-art machine learning technologies to identify users who violate our policies or engage in inappropriate behaviour'. This means that content is being electronically monitored in addition to the human reviewing of reports.

Anonymity

The app's creators want Monkey to be a place where children who might benefit from finding a listening, non-judgmental ear is there for them (they shared a few comments from users who struggle with bullying who found solace in the app). However, this puts a great deal of responsibility on the user in how to safely navigate anonymous environments.

Conclusion

As with all apps, I would encourage dialogue with your son/daughter about online usage and what the potential dangers are. I feel that Monkey have been responsible in setting up a clear framework to try and make this a safe place. However, even with the 24/7 review team and the electronic monitoring, the sharing of information with a stranger, or the continuation of a conversation on another social media platform is a hazard. If your son/daughter asks you about this app, you may wish to decide if the benefits outweigh the potential danger.

School Support

If you are concerned about your child, please make contact with the school and speak with either your son/daughter's Form Tutor or Head of Year. You can also speak with Miss Arthur (Deputy Head) or myself as Online Safety Coordinator.

If there are any topics that you would like more information about, or if you have any concerns regarding online safety, please feel free to contact me.