

May 2023

Children's Safety

It has been brought to our attention that some of our younger children have been coming to school by themselves in the mornings. Our school policy is that **ONLY children in Year 5 and 6** can come to school or go home alone when parents/carers have given written consent. Without written consent this cannot be agreed.

Children travelling alone either on foot or on public transport are vulnerable and can be exposed to risks of exploitation, theft and abuse. Therefore, please ensure that children come to school and are picked up from school by someone who is 16 or over.

Recently, we have had reported cases of children being approached by strangers in the street whilst travelling to school. Children have been offered items such as sweets and pocket knives or have been questioned about what they are wearing or where they are going. We have reported this to the local police.

Children at St Edward's are encouraged to speak to a member of staff in school about any concerns they have. Please also continue to speak to your children about being safe especially when they are out. By working together we can ensure that we keep our children safe and give them the confidence to speak out if they have a concern of any sort.



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

WIZZ

AGE RESTRICTION
12+

12+ App Store
Teen Google Playstore

Wizz is a networking app which allows users to connect and chat with other people around the world. Its principle is similar to a dating platform: users have a profile with up to three photos, along with optional interests and hobbies tags. This allows other like-minded people to be recommended in searches. If a user likes what they see on someone's profile, they can initiate conversation through the instant message feature; otherwise they swipe on. The app does use age verification technology when an account is created and groups users by age.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

OVER-SHARING

Immediately after setting up an account, users start receiving friend requests (mainly from the opposite gender). For many young people, this will be exciting and a boost to their confidence. As young people tend to be more trusting online and may believe what others tell them, however, this can lull them into dropping their guard and revealing personal information to strangers.

CATFISHING AND PREDATORS

Wizz uses Yoti, a digital ID system, to verify users' age. The AI only detects approximate age, though – so an older person who looks younger could be grouped with teens (or vice versa). Also, profile pics on Wizz don't have to match the face of the person who did the initial age verification: it would be fairly easy to create a fake account using another person's photos with a made-up name and age.

EXPLICIT CONTENT

During our research, conversations on Wizz very quickly turned sexual. Users frequently suggested 'taking it to Snap' (Snapchat's disappearing image feature can make it conducive to sharing explicit selfies), connecting on other social media, swapping nude or semi-nude pictures, or holding sexual chats. These users created an impression of the platform being sleazy and unsafe for young people.

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Advice for Parents & Carers

TALK IT OUT

If your child has downloaded Wizz, talk to them about why they like it and who've chatted with. Have they shared any personal details with this person or connected with them on other social media platforms? Refresh your child's memory of the various risks that can arise from engaging with strangers online and get them to consider using a similar app with more robust safety features.



BE SUPPORTIVE

When connecting with strangers on apps like Wizz, seemingly innocent chats can quickly progress to become sexually explicit and lead to nudes being sent. Make sure your child knows to come to you if they're uncomfortable about anything they've been sent or been asked to send. If they've already shared something that they now regret, reassure them that you'll support them no matter what.

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Young people are far more inclined to see the good in others; they often overlook the fact that scammers set up fake accounts on apps like this with the intention of getting money or personal data. Remind them that not everyone online is who they claim to be, how easy it is for someone to create a bogus profile, and why it's vital to think twice about sharing anything on networking apps.



KEEP THINGS TRANSPARENT

It might feel awkward, but regular chats about your child's online life can be beneficial. If they seem suddenly anxious or secretive around their phone or tablet, they may have something they need to get off their chest. You could also consider not allowing digital devices in their bedroom, especially overnight – that's when a lot of the riskier conversations on apps like Wizz tend to take place.



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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'Following Christ we reach our goals'