



A Parent's Guide – Hertford St. Andrew

Facebook is the online social networking service with 1.23 billion users worldwide. **Did you know that the minimum age for Facebook users is 13?**¹ Did you also know that over a third of 9-12 year olds in the UK have their own Facebook account?² While it is challenging to stop underage users using Facebook completely, there are a number of key questions you can ask yourself when faced with the issue:

Is my child's profile available for the whole world to see?

When a profile is first created, it is set to 'Public', so yes. However, by clicking *Privacy shortcuts* you can easily change it to be **Friends only**. This is the recommended setting.



Are you friends with your child on Facebook?

Being their friend will allow you to see their activity. If your child is putting revealing information/pictures/conversations about themselves then you will be better placed to see it.

Do you know all of your child's friends on Facebook? Do they?

You can view your child's friends list and see if they really know those people or not. Talk to them about how to block friend requests from strangers. Do they really know 500 people?

Does your child use Facebook without supervision?

Where is the computer in the house? Restrict them to using Facebook while you are around.

Is your child putting false information onto Facebook?

This is against Facebook's Terms and Conditions and could include things like: where they live, their current education and their employment. They may be creating a false alter ego online. They would have had to lie about their age to set up an account in the first place.

Does your child know never to put personal information online?

Information like their real address, school name, email address, passwords and phone numbers should never be put online in messages or posts. Talk to them about the risks.

Does your child know how to report issues?

Declining friend requests from strangers is easy. There are many instances when you can also report people, pages or photos to Facebook. Search Facebook help for '*Report Spam or Abuse*'.

Can I get my child's account deleted?

You can report any underage accounts to Facebook and they will have them removed. Google '*Report underage Facebook*'.

1 – Facebook Terms and Conditions and COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998) US law.

2 – theguardian.com, Jan 2013