

1st March 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

RE: Social Media use outside of school:

We are writing to advise you of a few concerns that we have regarding some students use of social media outside of school during evenings, weekends and school holidays. There are several groups of pupils using social media who are persistently being unkind about other pupils, using platforms such as Snapchat, WhatsApp and TikTok. We understand that this has included sharing unkind comments about pupils or sharing unkind images/memes of the pupils. This is resulting in some of our students becoming upset within our school community which does not follow our ethos or values as well as having an impact on mental wellbeing and on engagement in learning.

Most Social media apps are for pupils 13 years and over.

If you do allow your child to access social media, we ask for your vigilance. Just like their interactions in person, online interactions require supervision and support. Please see below some strategies that are known to be successful:

- Monitoring their phones for the apps that are downloaded.
- Enacting parental controls on phones and consoles.
- Reviewing the messages they send on platforms and apps – making monitoring part of a daily or weekly routine.
- Setting expectations about what space (preferably communal) and times they have access to devices.
- Encouraging them to share or discuss with you what they are doing.

Whilst we appreciate the benefits of these forms of communication, given some of our pupils' challenges with social interaction and social communication, many of our pupils are struggling when any problems or conflict arise as a result of what is being shared.

Even though this is happening outside of school hours, all our students' safety and wellbeing will always be a top priority and therefore we are asking for your partnership in dealing with this. As a school we are responding to this with additional teaching during Computing, PSHE lessons and in 1:1 conversations as they arise. We are also educating our students on healthy online relationships.

Please find below some links for supporting online use and reporting concerns. We have also added a helpful guide on age restrictions for various apps.

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/2023-01-12-is-whatsapp-safe-for-my-child/>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>
- <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>
- Link for reporting concerns - <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/how-to-make-a-report/>

Age Restrictions for Social Media Platforms

What is the minimum age for account holders on these social media sites and apps?



Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Alex Humphrey
Year 7 Learning Leader

Mrs Kym Browning
Year 7 Pastoral Manager