



18th September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Year 7 Social Media

As you are aware, the trend for our young people to use social media will continue to grow as they access everything the internet has to offer. This cannot, and should not, be handed over without due care and restrictions.

Based on our experiences in school and the combination of access to all that social media offers, young people's natural curiosity requires very careful managing.

It has been brought to our attention that there has been inappropriate WhatsApp activity within Year 7, which has taken place outside of school hours. This includes a number of very large groups being created, as well as tutor groups and friendship groups, where content has been taken out of context and led to inappropriate comments being sent within the group. This exposes those who are innocently part of the group.

We encourage you to have a conversation with your child about their online presence and the potential consequences of their actions. While it may seem anonymous and impersonal, nothing posted online can ever truly be taken back, and traces of who posted what content can be uncovered.

Therefore, we ask you to be fully engaged with your child's social media activity. The responsibility for monitoring a child's use of social media, or indeed the internet in general, must lie with parents and carers. We strongly encourage you to discuss issues around this with your child. If your child is the victim of inappropriate use then we recommend that you report the matter to both the website developer and to the Police.

We would also like to take this opportunity to inform you and your child that any person posting such material could potentially be committing a criminal offence. One such offence could be under the Malicious Communications Act 1988:

Any person who sends to another person:

- a letter, electronic communication or article of any description which conveys a message that is indecent or grossly offensive
- a threat
- information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender
- any article or electronic communication which is, in whole or part, of an indecent or grossly offensive nature.

.../cont.

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WhatsApp requires a minimum age of 16 but relies on the honesty of the child and family to adhere to the age restrictions.

The school will continue to educate pupils about the appropriateness of online social media. Our school website contains useful information to support you on online safety, as does our monthly online newsletter and Mrs Brown, Assistant Head Teacher, looks forward to discussing this important issue with you on the Year 7 Welcome Evening on Thursday 21st September.

Unfortunately, as you can appreciate, the school is limited in its ability to control or sanction content posted online. We can however offer support to pupils in navigating the process of reporting such content if needed, or they can report concerns through our 'report a concern' function via our school's Google platform.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R McLaren". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Mrs R McLaren
Deputy Head Teacher