

Dear parents and guardians,

**RE: E-Safety Update – Concerns and Actions.**

***Our concerns:***

You will recall from previous communication that e-safety has been a priority for us. Unfortunately, we have become increasingly concerned about Year 7's use of social media including messaging apps like WhatsApp.

We have been made aware of an increase in the number of large group chats where young people, sometimes in their hundreds, join and exchange messages and images with people that they do not know. We have been informed that some of these chats contain people who do not attend the school.

There is a real risk that chats and forums like this can be used for predators to make contact with young people. There is a great body of evidence that young people are being put at unnecessary risk of harm by being given unfiltered and unmonitored access to social media and messaging apps. It is for this reason that apps like WhatsApp have an age rating of 13+.

***Our advice:***

Therefore, we wish to raise this issue with you and ask for your support reinforcing these messages and speaking to the students about the dangers that exist on social media and messaging services.

If you have given permission for your son/daughter to download and use social media and messaging apps we would suggest that you read the guidance from the NSPCC and implement a strict checking and monitoring regime with your son/daughter. The information can be found here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/#guides>

Our primary concern is to safeguard the young people in our care, but this is something that we can only do in partnership with parents and guardians. We want to take this opportunity to share the important message that if you ever have any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a young person or view messages or images online that you consider to be breaking the law please contact the Police via 101 or the CIOP website at the bottom of this page.

***Our actions in school:***

As a step to educate students about the importance of e-safety we invited PC Gibson-Lees, our police school liaison officer, into school last Monday to deliver an assembly to year seven educating them about the dangers of misusing social media.

The key messages that were shared included:

- The laws relating to social media inc. that social media posts can result in police involvement.
- The dangers online.

This will be followed up by tutor time activities to contextualise the messages for the students into relatable scenarios.

Thank you for your support in this matter. If you have any concerns about activities online, then there are a range of organisations which offer support to parents which are listed below. We will continue to work with the young people here in school to educate them about the dangers of online activity and we thank you for your support in this.

Key links:

UK Safer Internet Centre: <https://saferinternet.org.uk>

NSPCC: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/online-safety-resources>

Police Online Safety Advice and Reporting Tool: <https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>

Kind regards,

Steve Cooper

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