

18<sup>th</sup> June 2025



Dear Parents and Guardians,

I'm writing to you today about the use of social media and online gaming platforms by some of our students. We've seen that these platforms can sometimes lead to **peer-related problems**, impacting behaviour and causing **social and emotional distress** for the children involved.

The use of social media apps like TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and online gaming, along with WhatsApp and YouTube, has grown tremendously. Many of these popular platforms have an **age rating of 13+**.

When used inappropriately, these platforms can cause a number of issues. This includes **safeguarding concerns, arguments, unkind behaviour, and even mental health and self-esteem problems**. It's important to remember that our **digital footprint lasts a lifetime**, and anything posted online, even in private messages, can have a lasting negative impact.

It's crucial that we work together to ensure all children are safe online and use these communication methods appropriately and respectfully. We strongly recommend that you continue to **closely monitor, and in some cases prohibit, your children's activities** on social media and other online sites.

#### **Key Safety Points for Online Platforms like TikTok:**

- **13+ Age Limit:** Remember, platforms like TikTok require users to be 13 or older. This protects younger users from inappropriate content and interactions. We strongly advise against children under 13 creating accounts.
- **Private Profiles:** If your child has an account, ensure their profile is set to **private**, not public. This means only approved followers can see their content, significantly reducing exposure to strangers.
- **Report Concerns:** Teach your child to report anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable, sad, or worried – whether it's cyberbullying, inappropriate content, or requests for personal information. Reassure them they can always tell you or a trusted adult at school. Visit the CEOP safety centre (<https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre>) to report criminal exploitation. If you are concerned that a child is in immediate danger, call 999.
- **Protect Personal Information:** Emphasise that they should **never post personal information about themselves or others online**. This includes names, ages, school, addresses, phone numbers, family details or images of themselves or others in school uniform. Once something is online, it's hard to remove and can be seen by anyone.

As a school, we're continuously working to educate children about staying safe online, using social media responsibly, and alerting a trusted adult to any worries. We do this through **PSHE, online safety lessons, and assemblies**. The school has a duty to **refer anything that could be defined as, or could potentially lead to, a Child Protection or Safeguarding issue** to the appropriate external agencies.

Navigating the digital world is challenging. Talk openly with your child about online activities, even exploring platforms together for better understanding. Excellent digital safety resources are available from organisations like The NSPCC, Internet Matters, and the UK Safer Internet Centre. Thank you for your partnership in keeping our school community safe. Please contact us with any concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Desoer

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