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To Carers of all Year 7 Pupils

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Dear Parent / Guardian

Social Media and Phone Usage

Whilst many of our Year 7 cohort are building healthy and supportive friendships with others, we are aware that there are still ongoing problems with unkind comments, rumours, and difficulties stemming from use of group chats on social media. **Almost all common social media apps (WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitter) come with a 13+ age restriction and should therefore not be used by our Year 7s without regular, thorough, parent or carer supervision.** Supervision is recommended not only for the content of messages your child sends or receives, but also for whom your child is communicating with. The aforementioned social media apps do provide [guidance on how to ensure these apps are used safely](#).

However, even when supervision is in place, we strongly discourage our students from using WhatsApp to create large group chats because at this age they are often counterproductive to safe and effective communication. Students have been told that large group chats are not appropriate, but we are aware that some have resurfaced despite this warning. Students can still share phone numbers with friends and communicate with them directly. We would appreciate your support in reinforcing positive social behaviours at home:

- Remind your child about the THINK approach (Is it True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, or Kind?) before they post or speak to or about someone else
- Monitor their screen use and encourage respectful digital communication, particularly in group chats
- Discuss the importance of kindness, especially when there has been a disagreement

In a [2024 survey](#), it was reported that just over seven out of 10 (71%) of children aged 9-13 said that they had been exposed to [harmful or inappropriate content online](#). Already this year, the Year 7 Pastoral Team has had to deal with several issues arising from students repeating inappropriate and/or harmful language or behaviours that they have seen online, for example on TikTok or YouTube.

If you wish to help your child to navigate the Internet safely, there is plenty of online guidance from organisations like [Internet Matters](#), [NSPCC](#) and [National Online Safety](#) to help support you with this. These organisations cover everything from what risks exist online to how to enable child safety restrictions on apps. Parental controls on home broadband, browser safe search settings and filters, and regulated screen time will help young people as they access materials online. As always, parents and carers should be aware of and regulate what our young people are sharing and viewing online.

Yours sincerely

Ms M Orchard
Director of Studies for Year 7