



5th March 2025

Dear Parents/Carers,

We hope this message finds you well. We would like to take a moment to share some concerns we've observed regarding students' use of social media outside of school during evenings and weekends.

As with many schools, we see incidents relating to student use of mobile phones occasionally, ranging from bullying to the sharing of inappropriate content. While most young people use their devices responsibly, we know that some may experience harm or be targeted online.

One particular area of concern we want to highlight is the creation of year group-wide chat groups on platforms such as WhatsApp. These chats, which are becoming more common across the country, can sometimes lead to unkind behaviour due to a lack of understanding about the potential harm that can be caused. We kindly ask that you check your child's device and, if necessary, discuss the potential risks of participating in such groups.

Another platform causing concern is Snapchat, please can we ask you to 'screenshot' any snapchat chats that may cause concern as this platform deletes conversations after 24 hours. These incidents often occur outside of school hours and involve devices that are provided by parents and carers. However, the impact of these behaviours can spill over into school time, requiring support from our pastoral and safeguarding teams. In some cases, we have needed to make referrals to external agencies.

We take these matters seriously and will always involve the police when necessary, particularly in cases of criminal or threatening behaviour as children can be held criminally responsible from the age of 10.

As parents and carers, we encourage you to ensure that appropriate parental controls are set on your child's mobile devices. Regularly checking devices, including smart TVs and gaming consoles, can help you stay informed about who your child is communicating with and what they are doing online. This proactive approach can make a big difference in keeping your child safe. The safest phone we suggest using, if your child needs it for travel to and from school, is not a smart phone, rather a 1990's brick phone for calling only.

If your child uses apps that are below the recommended age, we suggest additional safeguards, such as monitoring their devices more closely. Pay particular attention to photos, contacts, and social media groups to ensure you are aware of their online activity. It's also important to have open conversations with your child about the importance of kindness online and the potential impact of their actions on others. Our school curriculum includes lessons on online safety and responsible device use, which we hope will support these conversations.

There are many resources available to help you navigate online safety, and we encourage you to explore the following trusted websites for further information:

- Keeping children safe online | NSPCC
- Parents and Carers - UK Safer Internet Centre



-Keep Children Safe Online: Information, Advice, Support - Internet Matters

· Parents and carers | CEOP Education (thinkuknow.co.uk)

If you need guidance on setting up parental controls, we've included a link to a step-by-step guide for a variety of devices.

<https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/>

Thank you for your ongoing support in ensuring our children stay safe online.

Yours sincerely,

Colton Hills School Year 7 Team

Mr P Booton/Miss E Ireland



APPS AND THEIR AGE RATINGS

13+		16+	
Facebook	Snapchat	WhatsApp	
Instagram	Twitter	Sarahah	MeetMe
TikTok	Kik		
YouNow	Yubo	YOLO	LiveMe
House Party	Monkey		