



30th September

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to you as we have become aware of a number of social media chat groups that involve some of our students, particularly involving WhatsApp, Instagram and SnapChat. The groups vary in size but could be linked to a specific class, year group or more broad range of young people.

It has been brought to our attention that some of these groups include messages, images and videos relating to:

- swearing and rude language
- bullying and intimidation of others
- content of a violent nature, eg fighting
- content of an inappropriate sexual nature.

The admins of these groups are adding students at random and it is likely that these students are then subject to seeing the content mentioned above. It is also likely that members have been added from other year groups and even other schools. As you can imagine, this concerns us greatly from both a behaviour and a safeguarding perspective.

We always tackle incidents when they spill over into school and will follow our behaviour policy which is clear about the serious consequences of poor online behaviour. Students also follow our Acceptable Use Agreement which has equally clear expectations of courteous and considerate behaviour online. Our safeguarding policy is also absolutely clear about the steps we will take if actions fall into that category, including reporting to the police if necessary.

However, it is important to note that the behaviour of students online outside of school is the responsibility of parents. In order for us try to stop these groups being set up, and inappropriate messages being sent, it is important that you check and monitor your child's mobile phone. Please remove your child from any such groups where you identify unacceptable behaviour. Like us, I am sure you would not want your child to see content which may upset them or is unkind and unpleasant towards other pupils within our school community.

Students have told us that they are frequently added to groups on by people they do not know and when they leave are constantly re-added. WhatsApp have however recently introduced a privacy measure to prevent people unknown to you adding you to groups. If you are to allow your child to use WhatsApp then please follow the instructions below to ensure that the privacy settings are set up to prevent your child being added to groups and receiving unwanted messages:

- Open the WhatsApp icon on the phone
- Go to the settings icon. This is a cog symbol usually in the right- hand corner of the phone
- Click on 'Account'
- Click on 'Privacy'
- Click on 'Groups'
- Set it up as 'My Contacts' only

HEADTEACHER: Mr G Rule

I should also draw your attention to the important fact that since May 2018 the minimum age for using WhatsApp is **16 years old**. However, by following the above instructions your child should only be connected to trusted contacts.

There is excellent advice and guidance for parents about all aspects of online safety on the [ThinkUKnow](#) website, including a direct link for reporting serious concerns to the police CEOP team.

Thank you for your cooperation with this matter and if you have any queries or concerns then please do not hesitate to contact our pastoral or child protection teams here in school.

Yours faithfully,

S Dennison

Scott Dennison
Online Safety Lead