



Dear Parent/Carer,

9<sup>th</sup> November 23

## Online Safety & Cyberbullying

We have become increasingly concerned about the negative impact on our young people of social media, digital communication and general access to online materials.

As we have returned from this half term, we have seen an increase in reported on-line/cyber bullying using WhatsApp groups and snapchat conversations that have taken place in the holidays. Parents and pupils have reported serious concerns about some of the material that has been circulating in these large group chats. Some material is highly offensive and malicious and encourages the bullying/mocking of others including both staff and pupils. Please be reminded that legally WhatsApp should not be used by anyone under the age of 16. [Is WhatsApp safe for my child? | NSPCC](#)

I would urge you to have a conversation with your child regarding any groups they may be part of and actively encourage them to remove WhatsApp from their phones unless they are 16.

There are several other apps that can present children with difficulties, some are positive but also allow negative behaviours to be perpetrated. The link below highlights these and the reasons why.

<https://www.familyeducation.com/entertainment-activities/online/a-complete-guide-to-potentially-dangerous-apps-all-parents-should-be-aware-of>

In support of this, we have a dedicated section to our website to support parents

<https://bramcote.college/parents/online-safety>

On here you will find advice and guidance on how to support your child online. As a school we have signed up to National Online Safety, which provides detailed information to support parents. You can follow them on social media platforms but also access their resources via our website by signing up. Please see the attached letter for full details.

Overall, we know how difficult it can be to navigate the online world and for parents to expertly keep a handle on what their children may be doing when the online world is moving at such a fast rate.

Parental Tips for Online Safety:

- Talk to your children about their online use and who they are speaking to or connecting with
- Speak to them about the apps they use and their potential negative impact
- Set-up parental controls from your own devices
- Check and review their phones or consoles for apps and chat groups. Much in the same way you would verbally speak to them about conversations they have in person, ask them about chat groups and what might be said by others
- Put boundaries in place for how long they use it and do not allow it to encroach on bedtime routines. Online use can have a negative impact on sleep, which in turn can have an affect on their mood, concentration and over time, their mental health
- Remind your child about who they are, their value and worth – social media can be edifying but can also be destructive

Sadly, we are also seeing an increase in mental health issues with our young people, some of this linked to poor self-esteem and the influence of 'perfection' portrayed in filtered images. We also know that pupils as young as those in Year 7 are able to access pornography on their phones. It is truly shocking that young people are exposed to such explicit material. We know that this exposure influences their thinking and therefore their behaviour towards one another, how they conduct 'relationships' and behaviours that they accept as normal. We ensure that pupils are taught about healthy relationships in school and are able to discuss these topics in age-appropriate ways. However, it is important that we understand that repeated exposure to pornography re-wires young people's understanding of what is acceptable conduct. Below is a link to a site with useful information for parents.

[Pornography - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch with your child's tutor or head of year.

Heidi Gale

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Gale', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Headteacher