



Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School

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27th March 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

The world of social media and online communication changes rapidly and it can be hard for adults and children to keep up with the rapidly evolving landscape of the internet. We therefore consider it important from time to time to share with you any concerns that we come across in school or from other local organisations.



Whatsapp Group Chats

It has come to our attention that a number of our pupils are members of large Whatsapp group chats and the content of these chats are becoming increasingly unkind. We are also concerned that pupils are also joining Whatsapp groups with large numbers of people that they do not know. Whilst group chats can be useful for helping friends, people with shared interests or members of a club to communicate and coordinate activities, they can also leave young people feeling excluded and bullied - as well as providing opportunities for inappropriate content to be shared and viewed.

Within larger group chats, it is also more likely that your child will be communicating with people they don't really know. These strangers may be friends of the host, but not necessarily friendly towards your child and this could increase the chance of them coming across upsetting or negative messages. One group chat called "The World" has come to our attention in which people are encouraged to invite everyone they know to the group to share videos of fighting and other content that we would not deem as appropriate for pupils of our school to be viewing.

Our Actions and Consequences are very clear that we will not accept pupils communicating with one another in a negative way and this includes cyberbullying and/or inappropriate use of social media. If pupils are part of unkind online behaviour such as this they may be issued with a one hour Wednesday detention and potentially even a fixed term suspension depending on the seriousness of the comments/incidents. We may also request Police involvement.

To prevent your child being added to groups by people they don't know on Whatsapp, we recommend changing the group chat settings from "Everyone" to "My Contacts Except..." and using the tick icon to select all contacts. This option means that only your child's phone contacts, except those you exclude, can add your child to groups. But by selecting all the contacts, it means

"Pupils flourish, and support each other to succeed" - Ofsted



that nobody should be able to add your child to a group chat without first sending them an invitation.

There will be information provided for pupils in Form time this week to discuss these Whatsapp group chats, to explain our expectations surrounding them and to remind pupils of how they can keep themselves safe online. I would really appreciate your support in reiterating these messages at home too. You can find more information about keeping safe on Whatsapp at <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/social-media/whatsapp/>.

Keeping your child safe online

The most effective way to safeguard your child online is to regularly discuss social media with them, for example having a conversation about the social media platforms that they use, who they follow and who follows them.

We strongly advise you to monitor the history on your child's devices and talk to them about the dangers of open chat rooms and the possible potential risks of befriending an unknown person online.

For more information and tips for how to start a conversation about online safety with your child, please visit the NSPCC online resources here: [Talking to your child about online safety](#) .

What to do if you have any concerns

If you are concerned about possible illegal online activity, or any other activity that is worrying you, please report it directly to the police and notify us so that we are aware from a safeguarding perspective and can provide appropriate support as necessary. Any other concerns can be raised with your child's Form Tutor, Head of Year or a member of the safeguarding team:



Mrs Mansfield
Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Jackson
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Allcott
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Dayton
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Knott
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Mr Lister
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Mr Wood
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead



Mrs Graves
Deputy Designated
Safeguarding Lead

If you have something you do not feel comfortable about reporting to school, you can also report it using the NSPCC Helpline: Report Abuse in Education on 00800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.otg.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs M Jackson
Assistant Headteacher