

1 March 2022

Dear Parents/Carers

Social Media use outside of school

We are writing to advise you of a few concerns that we have regarding children's use of social media outside of school during evenings and weekends.

There are several groups of pupils using social media to be persistently unkind about other pupils over platforms such as Snapchat, WhatsApp and Discord. We understand that this has included both sharing unkind comments about pupils and sharing unkind images or memes of the pupils. This is leading to a lot of upset and polarisation of some pupils within school and is not in line with our ethos or values.

Most Social media apps are for pupils 13 years and over. If you do allow your child to access social media, we ask for your vigilance. Just like their interactions in person, online interactions require supervision and support. What is right will vary from family to family but some strategies that are known to be successful include:

- Monitoring their phones for the apps that are downloaded
- Enacting parental controls on phones and consoles
- Reviewing the messages they send on platforms and apps – making monitoring part of a daily or weekly routine
- Setting expectations about what space (preferably communal) and times they have access to devices
- Encouraging them to share or discuss with you what they are doing.

Whilst we appreciate the benefits (and prevalence) of these forms of communication, given our pupils' challenges with social interaction and social communication as part of their Autism diagnosis, many of our pupils are struggling when any problems or conflict arise as a result of what is being shared.

We are asking for your partnership in dealing with this, as this is happening outside of school.

As a school we are responding to this with additional teaching during Computing, Citizenship and Wellbeing lessons and in 1:1 conversations and teaching opportunities as they arise. We will also offer this as a future ParentMeet topic.

Please also find attached a helpful guide on settings for various apps.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Ralston', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Helen Ralston, Head of The Rise School

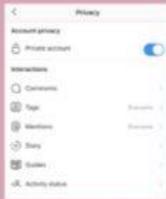
Social Media Settings



Most social media apps are 13+ (WhatsApp is 16+) but - as we are aware some children are using them regularly - we wanted to share some important settings to keep children safe online.



Instagram



PRIVATE ACCOUNT: when this is on, only followers can see your posts and stories and you have to approve followers **(recommended: on)**

COMMENTS, TAGS, MENTIONS, STORY: allows you to control who can tag you, comment on your posts, mention you in their story and control your story audience

You can also restrict, block or report a user by clicking on their profile and selecting the three dots in the top right.

You can also remove a follower using this method.



TikTok



PRIVATE ACCOUNT: when this is on, only followers can see your posts and you have to approve followers **(recommended: on)**

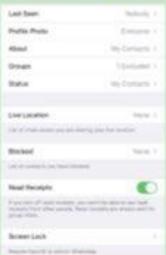
SAFETY: Tiktok has lots of options to restrict contact and interaction with video posts **(recommended: friends)**

COMMENT FILTERS: you can automatically hide comments that may have offensive words in **(recommended: on)**

You can also block, report or remove a follower by clicking on their profile and clicking the three dots in the top right hand corner.



WhatsApp



PROFILE PHOTO AND STATUS: You can change who can see a profile photo and status **(recommended: my contacts)**

GROUPS: allows you to stop a contact being able to add you to groups **(recommended for when a friend adds you without permission)**

BLOCKED: can add a contact to a blocked list so they can't message you.

You can also block or report a contact/ number by clicking on the chat with them, clicking on their number/name at the top then scrolling down!



Snapchat



CONTACT: decide who can message you and send you snaps **(recommended: my friends)**

VIEW MY STORY: restrict who can see your story **(recommended: my friends)**

GHOST MODE: if this isn't on, contacts can see your location on a map **(recommended: on)**

You can also block or report a user by locating their contact, tapping and holding their name and clicking more