



King Henry VIII School Pastoral Letter – Online Safety

Dr MB Cuthbert (Deputy Head/Designated Safeguarding Lead)
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Dear Parents and Guardians,

In my role of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for King Henry VIII School, I must take responsibility for the online safety of all our pupils. Online safety is very difficult to address and monitor. We work through many aspects of online safety in our PSHE programme but that is not enough. As a school, we rely on the parents/guardians of all our pupils to support us when addressing this important topic.

Mandatory Guidance

All institutions who work with children have a duty to apply the guidance found in a document called [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#). Page 35 of this guidance states that it is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material. An effective whole school approach to online safety empowers a school to protect and educate pupils, students, and staff in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any concerns where appropriate.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable and ever evolving but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism.

Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.

Conduct: online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying, and

Commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams.

We are required to have a clear policy on the use of mobile and smart technology. Amongst other things, this does reflect the fact many children have unlimited and unrestricted access to the internet via mobile phone networks (i.e. 3G, 4G and 5G). This access means some children, whilst at school, sexually harass, bully, and control others via their mobile and smart technology, share indecent images consensually and non-consensually (often via large chat groups) and view and share pornography and other harmful content.

Mobile Phones and Smart Watches

How we manage access to the internet via a mobile phone or smart watch is described in our school Behaviour Policy which can be found on the King Henry VIII Website and the link is [here](#).

If a mobile phone/smartwatch is required for added safety or security in journeying to and from school, they must, **on arrival at school**, be turned off and either

- Kept in the pupil's/student's school bag;
- Or placed in the pupil's/student's locker.

Pupils/students should not use mobile phones, smartwatches, headphones and airpods, during the course of the school day, after entering the school site and at any time during the school day. **No responsibility for the loss/damage of a mobile phone or electronic device will be accepted by the School.**

Pupils should assume that mobile phones/smartwatches are **NOT** allowed on school trips and visits, unless a specific instruction to the contrary has been issued.

Sixth Form students may carry their phone/smartwatch with them but it must be switched off and not visible on the main site. Sixth Form students may only use their phone or electronic devices in the social area of the Sixth Form Centre.

If a mobile phone or smartwatch is seen **out** (rather than seen in bag or pocket), it may be confiscated and handed to Reception to be collected at 4pm. **Having a mobile phone or smartwatch visible, whether a student is using one or not, results in a Tuesday Detention.** Mobile Phones and smartwatches may not be used between when a pupil/student enters the school site in the morning and 4pm. Please note that **they should only be used outside school buildings after 4pm**, if needed to check travel arrangements home.

Online Safety

At what age can my child start social networking?

As a parent, it's important you know that all social media platforms and messaging apps have age limits. Some social networks use technologies that may not be right for some ages or engage with communities made up of people much older than your child. We rely on parents to monitor social media apps at home to keep our pupils safe.

What are the risks of an underage social networking account?

- Many sites include an instant message function that allows private conversations between site members.
- Most social networking sites have an app version available, meaning your child will have access to the social network from their smartphone or tablet. Some app versions of social networks use the location of the phone.
- Information shared between friends can be easily copied and may spread.
- It isn't easy to take back information that has been posted – and can be impossible if it's already been shared.
- Not everyone your child meets online will be who they say they are. Chatrooms and forums can connect people who are complete strangers and can be unmoderated.

- Chatrooms and forums are some of the places online groomers go to connect with children. They can also be places where people use a lot of sexual language and engage in online flirting. This is sometimes done through video chat programs.

Here are some [age-appropriate social media apps](#) for younger kids that you may find useful.

Please take note of the age restrictions of the following Apps. Many of our pupils who are under 13, have WhatsApp on their mobiles, for example. Please could you ensure that your children adhere to the age restrictions of social media apps.

APPS AND THEIR AGE RATINGS

13+		16+	
 Facebook	 Snapchat	 WhatsApp	
 Instagram	 Twitter		
 TikTok	 Kik		
 YouNow	 Yubo		
 House Party	 Monkey		
		17+	18+
		 Sarahah	 MeetMe
		 YOLO	 LiveMe

The age rating for TikTok is going to be increased soon. I will let everyone know when this happens.

Guidance on social media and internet use within the home.

You only need to google for help on how to manage the social media use of your children and the internet produces an array of information and support. There are a number of particularly good sources I would like to draw your attention to:

Internet Matters: <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/social-media-advice-hub/>

NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Think u Know: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Young Minds: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/a-z-guide/social-media/>

The greatest challenge you will face as a parent is to maintain your expectations with respect to the social media use of your child as well as reigning them in when things get out of hand.

How can you help us?

We need your vigilance, help and support to ensure that our pupils demonstrate respect for others on social media and concentrate on their learning, rather than spend hours sharing and creating gossip that can be extremely damaging to the wellbeing of our pupils. Our PSHE programme for all year groups addresses online safety. Some pupils really listen and take on board what we teach them, others, however, continue to push the boundaries both morally and legally. We do find that pupils who push the boundaries, often experience more freedoms with mobile use within the home. We always encourage parents to not allow pupils access to social media when they are undertaking schoolwork or going to bed. May I challenge you to encourage your whole family to charge all devices in a separate room such as the lounge or kitchen overnight. Ensure that you have the appropriate parental controls on all devices as well as your Wi-Fi connection.

How can going online affect our wellbeing?

There are lots of positives for children being online, however there can be negatives too. For some it can become overwhelming trying to keep up with friends, and the pressure can mount.

Many things can impact our online wellbeing, and you can take control of the choices made to reduce any negativity. Being aware of the impact of being online, just like you would be aware of the impact of offline activities, is the first step to managing your children's online wellbeing.

We can:

- manage the content that our children see,
- ensure interactions are suitable
- and manage how long they're online, in balance with other activities.

There are several things you can do to help support a child with their wellbeing online, including specific apps, and looking at settings.

Have regular conversations with your child

Give children the chance to talk about what they're experiencing online, what apps and sites they use and who they're talking to. Talking regularly, like you would about their day at school, will help your child feel relaxed and mean that when they do have any worries, they're more likely to come and speak to you. Remind them that it isn't just you that they can talk to – another trusted adult or a Childline counsellor might be easier sometimes.

Fallouts with friends can affect children online, just as they do offline, and communicating online can lead to misunderstandings with friends. Encourage your child to look at the Childline website, which has lots of great advice articles:

- [Feeling good on social media](#)
- [Coping with stress](#)
- [Worries about the world](#)

Childline's [Calm zone](#) is also packed with tools and activities to help children de-stress and discover new techniques that can support them when they're feeling down. Young people can also talk to each other about their worries on the [Childline message boards](#).

Consider that what children see online is often through a filter. It isn't just images and videos that can be [filtered or edited](#), but bodies and lives too.

Many thanks for reading my pastoral letter,

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