

18<sup>th</sup> October 2023

## WhatsApp/Snapchat Groups

Dear Year 7 Parent/Carer,

I am writing to bring your attention to some recent concerns we have identified regarding the use of social media platforms by our Year 7 students.

As you may already know, WhatsApp is a messaging platform which is used to send messages, voice notes, pictures and other media. It is also commonly used for group chats with a large number of members. Snapchat is a similar app, but also allows students to communicate by sending messages as a picture, which disappears after viewing it.

Unfortunately, we have observed several concerning trends among our Year 7 students on these platforms, including:

- **Creation of large group chats:** Students have been forming groups with 20 or more participants.
- **Unauthorised additions:** Some students are adding others to group chats without their consent.
- **Inappropriate content:** We have noticed group chats with offensive names and descriptions, as well as inappropriate comments made by students.
- **Bullying concerns:** There is a potential for bullying through these group chats, which is deeply concerning.

Additionally, Snapchat's feature of disappearing messages complicates parental monitoring and school intervention. It is significantly challenging for parents to oversee their child's activities on Snapchat compared to other apps. This also hampers the school's ability to investigate incidents of cyberbullying or intolerant behaviour effectively. Please note that Snapchat's own terms of use specify a minimum age of 13 for its users.

**Due to the large number of students engaging in these activities, all parents/carers of Year 7 students have been sent this letter.** To address these issues, we request your assistance in checking your child's devices and that they are not part of any large group chats. If necessary, please ensure that they leave these groups and/or delete the Snapchat app from their devices. Please be aware that our school policy strictly prohibits students from participating in group chats exceeding 6 members (this does not apply to group chats with family members). After the upcoming half term, any student found in violation of this policy will face appropriate sanctions.

Our school does not randomly inspect students' phones. However, if there is credible evidence suggesting a breach of our policy, we may request to review the content in question. We strongly urge you to actively monitor your child's phone usage, including their social media interactions. Your attention to this matter is vital, and we sincerely appreciate your ongoing support.

For further information and resources on parental controls and online safety, please visit the following websites:

1. [Protect Young Eyes](#)
2. [Net Aware](#)
3. [Connect Safely - Snapchat Guide](#)

Should you have any concerns or queries, please feel free to contact me directly via email at [i.madill@kaa.org.uk](mailto:i.madill@kaa.org.uk).

Yours Sincerely,

**Ms I Madill**  
**Director of Learning Y7**