

## Reminder to Parents: Addressing Inappropriate Social Media Use and Online Bullying

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this message finds you well. I am reaching out to make the school position clear and to seek your support in addressing an important issue concerning the use of social media platforms, such as TikTok, Whatsapp, Snapchat to name a few and the potential for misuse that can impact our school community.

As I am sure you are aware, although social media can be a positive way of keeping in touch with your friends, it also has a number of negative impacts. These include but are not restricted to, disrupting sleep, exposing your child to bullying, rumour spreading, unrealistic views of other people's lives and peer pressure. It is also important to note that the majority of social media platforms have age restrictions on them and they are only allowed for users who are aged 13 or older and thus should not be used by students starting at secondary school.

Recently, we have noticed instances of inappropriate online behaviour, including **online bullying of pupils**, which is classified as **malicious communication**. As part of the school's Behaviour policy, this is defined as a serious misbehaviour and so will be followed up in this manner. These actions can have serious consequences and require collective attention to ensure a safe and respectful environment for everyone.

### Understanding the Concerns

Malicious communication refers to any act of using online platforms to cause harm, including:

1. **Targeting Pupils or Staff:** Posting offensive, hurtful, or defamatory comments or content.
2. **Spreading False Information:** Sharing untrue or misleading material that damages reputations.
3. **Encouraging Harmful Trends:** Participating in or supporting activities that intimidate or humiliate others.

Such behaviour not only breaches our school's code of conduct but may also violate legal standards designed to protect individuals from harassment.

### The Role of Parents and Guardians

We encourage you to:

1. **Monitor Social Media Usage:** Regularly discuss the importance of appropriate behaviour online and review your child's activity on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and others.
2. **Promote Digital Etiquette:** Reinforce values of kindness, respect, and empathy in online interactions.
3. **Address Concerns Proactively:** If you notice your child engaging in or affected by inappropriate behaviour, address it immediately and seek support from the school if needed.

## Consequences for Misconduct

Students found engaging in online bullying or malicious communication may face:

- Disciplinary actions, including suspension or other measures in accordance with school policy.
- Escalation to legal authorities for severe cases, as online bullying and harassment can have legal repercussions.

## Supporting a Positive Environment

At Heron Hall, we are committed to fostering a respectful and supportive environment both offline and online. If you or your child have concerns or are aware of any instances of online bullying, please reach out to the school. Our teachers and pastoral teams are here to listen and help.

To support you in keeping your children safe we have linked a few websites recommended by eSafe below. These will allow you to be aware of the perceived risks around games, apps and social media.

- <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/>
- <https://www.common sense media.org/app-reviews>
- [apps.lgfl.net](https://apps.lgfl.net)
- [screentime.lgfl.net](https://screentime.lgfl.net)
- [parentsafe.lgfl.net](https://parentsafe.lgfl.net)
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/social-media-and-mental-health/>

Together, we can guide our young people to use social media responsibly, ensuring it becomes a space for creativity and connection rather than harm. Thank you for your understanding and continued support in this matter.

Kind regards,  
Arthur Barzey  
Headteacher  
Heron Hall Academy

Yours sincerely



**Mr Arthur Barzey**  
**Headteacher**