



BASSINGBOURN
VILLAGE COLLEGE

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Dear Parents and Carers

I thank you in advance for reading this important letter.

Here at Bassingbourn Village College we raise awareness of the dangers that can be associated with social networking and platforms, such as TikTok and Snapchat, on an ongoing basis.

We recognise the importance of online communication in the lives of young people today but, unfortunately, we experience the negativity that social networking can bring to the lives of our children.

Here at the college, we do not allow students to use their mobile phones and therefore the issues linked to social media use happen beyond the college day. All students are required to place their mobile phones in the bags, or inside pockets, before they enter the college in the morning and not remove these until they have left at the end of the day.

It is key that the college and our families come together to protect children against negative comments, videos and photos that can have a major impact upon the happiness and the progress of our children.

At the college, we:

- educate the students in the use of technology and the dangers of this;
- check each day to ensure that students place their phones away at the start of each day and that these are not seen or heard on the college site; and
- address any concerns when they are raised using our Respect reporting system. All students have been made aware of our five ways of reporting a concern, and this is included in our weekly newsletter.

It is important for parents and carers to note that we cannot carry out investigations regarding comments and posts that are put on social media anonymously and whilst children are at home during the evenings and weekends. Of course, if we can easily identify the students, we deal with these issues using our Anti-Bullying Policy.

Advice and guidance for parents and carers regarding monitoring of social media:

We have put together some advice for parents and carers so that we can work together to keep our children safe.

1. Communicate with your children about their online behaviour. Ask them what they are doing and which sites they are using. Most social media sites stipulate a minimum user age of 13. Make sure that children know how to use the privacy tools provided and that they are aware of the importance of keeping their profiles private.
2. Don't allow them to access social media sites if you feel this will have a negative impact on them; children do not have to be on these sites, it is a choice.
3. Support your child in ensuring that they only add contacts that they know and trust offline. Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online is dangerous. One way to keep an eye on how your child uses a social networking site is to connect with them. If they are being contacted by someone that is not a friend, it is because they have given out their details.
4. Students should only have their close friends as contacts; students should not have contacts on their phones from students in much older or younger years.
5. Underline the importance of not publishing or forwarding images and videos which jeopardise their safety or integrity. Nothing which is published online can ever be deleted; everything should be assumed to be permanent. Recent studies have indicated that 1 in 4 UK employers visit social media sites to research

- candidates. They should also ensure that they have permission from others before posting images of them online. It is a criminal offence to circulate inappropriate images of children, even if they are of themselves.
6. Emphasise the importance of thinking before they post something online. Remind them that messages can be misunderstood online. If they are not sure and would not be happy for their parents, carers or teachers to see it, it is best not to post it.
 7. Limit the time your children spend online.
 8. Do not let them take their devices to bed with them as research has shown this to have a detrimental effect on sleep and performance at school. Insist upon device-free time at home; for example, at meal times and when your child is doing their homework.

Ages for different platforms:

We would like to take this opportunity to remind parents and guardians of the minimum age requirements for these platforms. **Year 7 should not be accessing any platforms as the minimum age is 13.** We are being asked to address issues with their children on platforms they should not be on.

Platform	Minimum age (years)
TikTok	13
Instagram	13
YouTube	13
Twitch	13
Discord	13
WhatsApp	16

Please remember that, as a parent or carer, it is your responsibility to ensure that your child is using their online devices appropriately and safely. Here at the college, we are also working hard to support you in this.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Stoneham

Principal