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Dear Parent/Carer

As we start a new school year I just wanted to share a reminder about the importance of keeping your child safe online. We know that there are many positive sides to using electronic devices and for many it was a lifeline during lockdown in terms of keeping in touch with family members and friends; however we also know that many young people have spent much longer on their devices recently and whilst the return to school allows some respite from this, there are many concerning aspects of online usage which can put your child at risk. As such it is important you are pro-active in being aware of this and the type of dangers there are.

We ask parents to be aware of age restrictions for various social media platforms. Nearly all social media services require users to be at least 13 years of age to access to use their services. This includes Tik Tok, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Musical.ly and Skype, however WhatsApp has a 16+ age restriction. Even if a child is chronologically old enough to access these sites, they are unlikely to have the emotional maturity to manage all the information that they access, some of which will be unpleasant and upsetting, or to understand that people may not really be who they claim. In particular we ask our Year 7 and younger Year 8 parents to be aware of this as their children are not old enough to have access to these sites.

In reality this is an area where children often know more than the adults around them, so please do take time to educate yourselves in order that you can support your child effectively and ensure they know when they should seek help or discuss any concerns/incidents. If you wish to research this area further please do take a look at <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parents-guide-technology>

We recommend the use of parental apps that can monitor mobile device usage and also that all devices are left downstairs before students go to bed. We also remind you that the school has a no-phone policy and that any phones seen or heard in school will be confiscated. Queensbury Academy also takes any issues of bullying seriously; this includes any online incidents of unpleasantness, which can be sanctioned by the school, and with the involvement of the Police if necessary.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school you wish any further advice or ever need support with an e-safety matter.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Mason  
Designated Safeguarding Lead  
Senior Vice Principal

