



# Biddenham

International School & Sports College

Principal: Mr David Bailey

Head of School: Ms Eleanor Grylls

December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have previously informed you of the age limits associated with many social media platforms, which our students now meet. Online safety is an important part of keeping your children safe at school, and we wish to work with you to ensure they have responsible and appropriate online role models and learn to behave safely online when using, posting and sharing on social media sites. We would encourage you to regularly check content your child is posting, and their direct messages.

Two new platforms we have become aware of recently are, **Omegle** and **Cuff**. These applications have an age restriction of 17+ years. They involve linking to another user for a fixed period of time and then randomly linking to a different person, and so on. This is dangerous for the children as they do not know the person they could be linked with. Also with the age restriction being 17+ years if they fabricate their age to get an account the other users will expect them to be adults.

If your child is under the age restrictions in place to use a particular social media platform on a personal device they will have had to put a fictitious date of birth into the app in order to access an account. Doing this can present a number of risks to your child, and could expose them to harmful or disturbing content.

**Disappearing Messages** are videos, images, or text which, depending on the platform and individual settings, will delete automatically after a predetermined amount of time. You may hear them referred to as 'snaps', 'secret conversations' or 'vanishing messages' and the tech industry calls them 'ephemeral messages'. Disappearing messages present a risk to children and young people in a number of ways. Particularly as they lead children and young people into a false sense of security whereby what they share appears to be more private than it actually is. They may think their messages will disappear, but recipients can still save them elsewhere. These types of messages and their associated risks have been covered by an assembly on cyber safety. However, we felt it important that parents were informed too.

It is important to recognise the impact social media can have on our young people, and their mental health and wellbeing. The possible risks include but are not limited to:

Bullying  
Being exploited by others  
Engaging in abusive or harmful conversations or topics  
Peer pressure  
Harassment

We take all instances of bullying, cyber-bullying or harassment involving any members of our communities very seriously. We want all members of the Biddenham community to feel safe both on and offline.

We would also like to remind you that mobile devices do not have to be brought into school and if students need to contact home, there are facilities to do this throughout the school day.

If you have further queries or concerns about the content of this letter then please do get in touch with the Pastoral team.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Warburton  
Deputy Headteacher

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