

1 February 2021



# Ralph Allen School

Respect • Teamwork • Personal Best

Dear Parents/Carers

Thank goodness for technology and social media during this current crisis. It has opened up a world of exciting possibilities allowing our teachers to carry on teaching; our students to carry on learning and all of us to connect and communicate despite being isolated from our family and friends. As a parent I have found myself encouraging my teenagers to join with friends on X Box games, use Youtube to participate in a Joe Wicks work out and zoom their friends to stay connected.

However, with the digital world changing all the time, it is really important we keep our children safe online and remind them about being kind and thoughtful in their communication.

Use of social media apps like **Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp and Tiktok** are popular platforms for communication which allow our young people to send messages, images and videos to one another in group chats. Rather than demonising social media we want to open up a conversation about how we can interact positively, safely and wisely online. We know that heavy social media usage can be linked to negative wellbeing and self-esteem as less time is spent doing healthy, real world activities. However, some connection online can support teenagers struggling who feel isolated or marginalised.

We would like to remind our young people about being kind and respectful in their social media use. Please encourage your child to think before they post, as once posted they will lose control of the image or message, especially if someone screen shots or shares it. They need to ask for help if they see something they do not like and remember to never share personal details online. Please remind your son/daughter to forget about "likes" and remember that everything they see on social media is not necessarily real.

As with all social media, caution is advised over your child's digital footprint, particularly the content (photos, videos and messages) that students choose to share. Nearly all social media services require users to be a minimum of 13 years of age and WhatsApp's minimum age requirement to use the service is 16 years. Please check your child's use of social media carefully.

Last year we had the pleasure of inviting Paul Thompson to deliver an E-Safety presentation talk to our parents, he advised parents about how to stay one step ahead and provided advice to help keep their children safe online as well as building healthy relationships with social media. The presentation can be found [here](#) on our website.

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The following links offer advice and support when talking to your child about their use of social media, we can also recommend 'The Social Dilemma' on Netflix for you to watch as a parent which is a real eye opener.

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/whatsapp/>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/whatsapp-safety-a-how-to-guide-for-parents/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by email and I will get back to you as soon as possible [h.fleming@ralphallenschool.com](mailto:h.fleming@ralphallenschool.com).

Thank you for your continued support

Best Wishes

*H Fleming*

Hannah Fleming

**Assistant Headteacher - Wellbeing**

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