

## Online Safety & Social Media – Information for Parents of Years 5 & 6.

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to share some important information regarding child(ren)'s use of social media and messaging platforms outside of school hours.

At St. Edmund's, pupils are not permitted to use mobile phones during the school day. Phones brought into school are handed into the office and returned at the end of the day, ensuring they remain a safety tool for journeys to and from school.

However, we are increasingly aware of situations taking place outside of school which are beginning to impact pupils' friendships, wellbeing, and, in some cases, their readiness to attend school.

### What we are seeing

We have been made aware of concerns linked to platforms such as WhatsApp, including:

- Large group chats involving pupils
- Polls or messages that single out individuals
- Unkind or inappropriate language
- Sharing of concerning emojis
- Situations that begin as "banter" but lead to upset
- Occasional adult involvement in children's group chats

### Use of WhatsApp

We recognise that WhatsApp can be a useful tool for family communication.

The concerns we are seeing relate to:

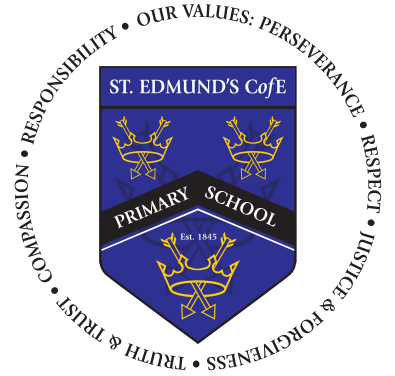
- Unsupervised peer group chats
- Large messaging groups
- Interactions without adult oversight

These can be difficult for primary-aged children to manage.

### We understand the challenge

We appreciate that parents are balancing keeping children safe while also ensuring they feel included.

From our experience, difficulties tend to arise when children use group chats without clear boundaries. While they may enjoy being part of these initially, situations can change quickly and become difficult to manage.



Setting boundaries or delaying access is a positive and protective step.

### Age guidance

Platforms such as WhatsApp have a minimum age requirement of **13+**.

### How parents can help

Information found online suggest that you can support your child by:

- Knowing which apps they are using
- Checking messages and group chats where appropriate
- Setting clear expectations around device use
- Encouraging them to speak to a trusted adult
- Supporting them to step away from unkind situations

Check here <https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/social-media/whatsapp/> for more information on how to set up privacy settings on your child's device.

### When concerns continue

Most situations can be resolved through communication and support.

Where concerns continue or begin to affect wellbeing, relationships, or attendance, the school may:

- Involve the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Work more closely with families
- Monitor patterns of concern

In some cases, advice may be sought from external services to ensure appropriate support.

### Final message

Our aim is to work in partnership with families to ensure all children feel safe and supported.

By maintaining clear boundaries and open communication, we can help children navigate online spaces more safely.

If you would like further advice or support, please contact the school.

As always, thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Mr A. Bandy-Webb  
Headteacher