



17 September 2020

CXP/NAH/whatsappconcernsletterY7/1792020

Dear Year 7 Parents and Carers

WHATSAPP CONCERNS

We are becoming increasingly concerned about a number of WhatsApp group chats that are being used by Year 7 students at St John's. These group chats are using the St John's logo which may make them look like an official school sanctioned site, but we do not use social media as a way to directly communicate with our students.

The minimum age for use of WhatsApp is 16 years old. Like many age restrictions on social media apps children often choose to ignore this. As you are no doubt aware, WhatsApp main purpose is to send messages to friends or take part in group chats.

The group chat function allows up to 256 people of chat in one conversation stream. Anyone in the group, even if they are not one of your child's contacts will be able to see messages that they post together with their contact information.

Our concern is that this enables anyone that your child may have previously blocked to be able to contact them which could lead to cases of online bullying.

All social media Apps have an age limit of 13 and therefore should not be being used by students in Year 7. There are lots of reasons why these sites can be unsafe for young people so it's important that they don't use them until they know how to do so safely.

We are aware that many Apps were relied upon during lockdown to keep in contact with friends and family, but it is important that these are now removed. As the bill payer it is the parents' responsibility to check what social media your child has on their phone and to have regular discussions about the appropriate and safe use of these social media sites.

If you have any concerns about the use of social media by your child, please do not hesitate to contact our E-safety Officer, Mr C Field, at St John's.

Your faithfully

Mr C Paul
Assistant Vice Principal, KS3

Mrs N Hawkins
Head of Year 7

