



# Robert Smyth Academy

Dear Families,

## **Safeguarding Update following letter regarding "Adolescence"**

Following on from the Principal's letter last week, we hope you have had a chance to watch the Netflix series 'Adolescence'. Thank you to the parents who have emailed us regarding this topic. We have received requests for information and resources to support parents in monitoring their child's social media use and managing risk. **We are encouraged that many parents have begun to engage in discussions about this.**

### **Managing social media**

Most students report that they use social media more than ever. We know that there are specific aspects that can negatively impact their mental health and wellbeing, and we suggest that parents check the following information with their children:

- **Privacy** - Check your privacy settings regularly to ensure that your accounts are not set to public.
- **Content** – Review the content you see, which has been tailored to you based on the information you have provided.
- **Information we share** - Limit content sharing online to only the people you know and trust.
- **Passwords** - Set strong passwords by mixing letters, numbers, and special characters.
- **Time spent** – Enforce a regular cut-off time at night, where you can put your phone down to help get a good night's sleep.
- **Minimum age requirements** – Please note that most social media platforms are recommended for use by individuals aged 13 and older. However, we know that most students use these applications.

### **Question**

*How do I check my child's social media? For example, their WhatsApp account.*

### **Answer**

There are several options here, but the first thing to remember is that you have a position of responsibility as your child's parent, and you likely paid for their phone. However, we recognise that privacy is a sensitive matter, and children require space and time to develop; therefore, this is a nuanced issue.

You do have options available to you. We know that some parents download the WhatsApp application and enter their child's information so that they can review this in the background periodically. Alternatively, you could regularly review your child's mobile phone with them. This will give you peace of mind, knowing you can verify your child's safety on social media.

If those approaches don't feel right, then you can limit the times and spaces where children can use their phones, so they are only used until 8 pm and only in the living room, for example.

The key is to ensure that you are reflecting on their access to social media and proactively keeping them safe.

The link below will help parents learn about the more popular games and platforms that secondary students might use, including their benefits and the issues to watch out for:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/online-abuse/>



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## **Help children stay safe on chat apps**

Every social media user, including your child, has a responsibility to ensure that the content they post is not harmful to others. We all know our children are spending more time on social platforms including chat apps, such as Snapchat and WhatsApp. You should schedule a time when you can monitor this with your child.

The NSPCC have some useful information on various aspects of staying safe whilst using chat apps. The links for these are below:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/chat-apps/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/livestreaming-online-video-apps/>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/schools-esafety/secondary/>

## **Inappropriate or explicit content**

We have previously sent out information on online issues such as sextortion. The following link is for parents who would like advice on helping their child who may have encountered explicit or harmful content:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/inappropriate-explicit-content/>

## **Further resources**

As part of our role and responsibilities to support you in safeguarding your child, we send out monthly Spotlight Safeguarding newsletters.

These can be found here: <https://www.robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk/about/safeguarding/safeguarding-news/>

The following monthly newsletters touch on these relevant themes:

- October 2024 – **Sharing images online**
- November 2024 - **Online bullying and WhatsApp**
- December 2024 - **Instagram and gaming**
- January 2025 - **Sextortion and TikTok**
- February 2025 - **Sexism and Misogyny**

## **Get in touch**

If parents have any further questions or would like to ask for specific advice regarding any of these themes, then please email our Safeguarding Team, and we will do our best to support you:

[safeguarding@robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk)

As a reminder, both students and parents can report any concerns through our **MyVoice** safeguarding reporting platform. The link is available on the school website:

<https://www.robertsmyth.tgacademy.org.uk/about/safeguarding/myvoice/>

As always, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contributions to our school community in helping keep our students safe. We are very grateful to have the chance to work with so many supportive parents.

Yours sincerely,

**The Safeguarding Team**