ORMISTON
SIX VILLAGES
ACADEMY

EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

[OAT]
Ormiston Academies Trust
AN OAT ACADEMY

22nd November 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

Social Media

Many of our students are very active users of social media, most notably Instagram and Snapchat. Please note that the age requirement for both of the Apps is 13 so any child under that age should not have an account.

Many of our students use these Apps appropriately and they are a fun and interesting way to communicate with their friends.

Nonetheless a minority can have issues as a result of the apps. General advice is to always limit the amount of time a student is allowed on the Apps to a couple of hours a day. Likewise, all students should turn their mobile phones off when they go to bed and not have their phone in their bedroom as this is scientifically proven to distract young people and negatively affect sleep patterns.

Occasionally the Apps will also be used to create conflict between peers. We strongly encourage all parents to tell their children to immediately block any conversation that is causing conflict. If there are threats or unpleasant comments made, please also screenshot the messages so you have a record of them. If you have significant concerns about any potential abuse from another young person, having recorded the conversation you are entitled to refer this to the police either online or using the 101 function. If the conflict is between students who attend Six Villages we would encourage you to contact us to ensure we can reinforce any messages externally.

Please read the TIKTOK information opposite and the Snapchat and Group Chat leaflets at the end of this letter.

Academy Winter Concert
We are very much looking forward to our Year 7 students showcasing the work they have been doing in their groups on the cornet or violin in their Music lessons as part of our 'Music for All' programme. Our Winter Concert will be taking place on **Wednesday 11th December from 6pm**. We would like as many students as possible to participate in this event, and therefore ask for this form to be completed to confirm your child's attendance at this event. We anticipate the whole event, including performances from other students in different year groups will last for approximately an hour. https://forms.office.com/e/NWApAtG84Y

Please can parents of Year 8 performers complete this link: https://forms.office.com/e/vHj3c9yShs
If you have any questions, please contact Mr Munt on dmt@ormistonsixvillages.org.uk.

Year 11 Mock Exams
I am extremely proud of our Year 11 students who have had exemplary conduct during the last two weeks of mock exams. They have approached the exams with maturity and whilst we still need to work on students ensuring they have all the equipment they need, we are optimistic that the mock exams have provided students with a thorough understanding and experience of JCQ exam regulations and in time, when the mock results are issued, students will know what to focus on in the months leading to the public examinations which begin in early May.

Mocks continue next week with Art and Photography exams which take place over two full days. These exams are also conducted with the same routines as written exams.

INSET Day
A reminder that next Friday (29th) is an INSET day and the academy will be closed.

Parent Governor
I am delighted to announce, following the ballot for parent governor, that Mrs Claire Mitchell was elected by you and will therefore join the Local Governing Body. Thank you to all those of you who voted.

Adverse weather - Procedure for emergency school closure
We are approaching the time of the year when I remind parents and carers of our procedures in the event of adverse weather, eg. snow.

It is the aim of the academy to remain open during all types of adverse weather conditions, providing this can be done in a safe manner.

In the event of extreme weather conditions, such as heavy snow, which can cause unsafe conditions, a decision regarding whether the academy can safely open can usually only be made on the morning. The safety of the site would be risk assessed and an update will be posted as early as possible on our website, communicated to parents and carers via email and posted on social media.

As the weather gets colder, please ensure your child is sent to school wearing appropriate clothing for the weather conditions.

Parent Forum
I will be holding a Parent Forum at 3pm on Thursday 5th December. I have previously held these in the evenings, but as attendance is historically low, I thought it may be good to hold it straight after the end of school. I hope to see many of you then.

GCSE Presentation Evening – Year 12, 6pm
We look forward to welcoming back the Class of 2024 to receive their GCSE certificates. Letters have been posted and from Monday there will be a link on the website to confirm attendance and numbers, for the practical purposes of refreshments and seating.

Last week's tutees of the week

7O	Edwin S	8O	Paris G	9O	Liam B	10O	Hattie G	11O	Cadence EW
7R	Seb C	8R	Imogen K	9R	Joshua W	10R	Elsie F	11R	Lillie B
7M	Ivor S	8M	Jessica B	9M	Lexi E	10M	Luke B	11S	Mya S-P
7S	Mia F	8S	Daniel E	9S	Kieran T	10S	Darcey H	11T	Emily F
7T	Eva J	8T	Bradley H	9T	Ava H	10T	Joseph L		

This week's tutees of the week

7O	Freddie K	8O	Isaac K	9O	Evie B	10O	Clemmie R	11O	Jack F
7R	William L	8R	Teddy W	9R	Kyle B	10R	Harry C	11R	Poppy
7M	Mya K	8M	Eden S	9M	Harrison T	10M	Dhyan T-R	11S	Mia S
7S	Lola B	8S	Corey D	9S	Liam B	10S	Eliza P	11T	Charlie J
7T	Freddie	8T	Julia S	9T	Lucas T	10T	George G		

Last week's Sparx Superstars: congratulations to the following students who did the most independent learning

Matthew T	Jessica B	Oliver E	Rose H	Riley V
Ethan W	Dhyan T R	Alice M	Henry H	Kacy S

This week's Sparx Superstars: congratulations to the following students who completed their target to 100%

Mikey D	Denis M	Elissa R	Arthur M	William L
Hannah C	Kallum R	Issac K	Jack S	Joshua W

Next week's fixtures

Week Beginning	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
25th November 2024	Year 9 Boys Football (H) vs TPS Collection time: 5:15pm Year 8 Rugby (A) vs TRS Collection time: 5:15pm	WSW cross country (A) @ BL	Year 10 Netball (H) vs MRC Collection time: 5.00pm
2nd December 2024	Year 7 Girls Football Tournament (A) @ TRS Collection time: 5:15pm/5.30pm	U14 Girls Basketball (A) FCC Collection time: 5:15pm	Year 10 Netball (H) SPH Collection time: 5:00pm

Details of teams and timings are also posted on Satchel.

Contact details
If you move house or change your mobile number, please can you let Mrs Danilovic know (hdc@ormistonsixvillages.org.uk) so that your child's student record can be updated. It is vital that we can contact you in the event of an emergency. Thank you in advance.

Key dates for next half term
29th November   INSET day (academy closed)
5th December   GCSE Presentation Evening (Year 12 students)
10th December   Year 10 Rewards Day and Christmas Lunch
11th December   Winter Concert
12th December   Year 11 Rewards Day and Christmas Lunch
13th December   Year 9 and Year 10 Army career and skills day
17th December   Year 8 Rewards Day and Christmas Lunch
18th December   Year 9 Rewards Day and Christmas Lunch
18th December   Year 7 Pantomime Trip
19th December   Year 7 Rewards Day and Christmas Lunch

Yours sincerely

Paul Slaughter
Principal

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about
GROUP CHATS

On messaging apps, social media and online games, group chats are among the most popular ways that young people engage with their peers online. Involving three or more individuals, these groups allow users to send messages, images and videos to everyone in one place. While they can be great for connecting with others, there are several risks posed by these tools.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

BULLYING

Teens are often trying to find their place in their social group. Unfortunately, group chats can sometimes lend themselves to unkind comments being shared freely, putting people down to make their peers laugh – often creating a vicious circle that encourages others to join in. Being bullied so publicly – in front of friends and acquaintances – can also amplify the hurt, embarrassment and anxiety that the victim feels.

EXCLUSION AND ISOLATION

This common issue with group chats can happen in several ways: for instance, starting a new group, but deliberately excluding a certain child. Likewise, the chat may take place on an app which one person doesn't have access to, meaning they can't be involved. A child can also feel isolated when a group chat is used to discuss events that exclude them – for example, sharing photos from a day out that they didn't attend.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some discussions in group chats may include inappropriate words, swearing and unsuitable images or videos. These could be viewed by a child if they are part of that group, whether they actively engage in it or not. Some apps have features that cause messages to disappear after they're viewed, so children may be unable to report something they've seen, as it can only be viewed once or for a short time.

SHARING GROUP CONTENT

Group chats can feel more private and protected, allowing children to share inside jokes and video calls with a smaller group of friends. It's important to remember that while the chat's content is private between those in the group, individual users can easily share material with others outside of the group, or screenshot what's been posted. The risk of something a child intended as private becoming public is higher if there are strangers in the chat.

UNKNOWN MEMBERS

Within larger group chats, it's more likely for children to communicate with people they don't know. These strangers may be friends of the host, but not necessarily friendly towards everyone present. It's wise for young people to avoid sharing personal details and remember that they have no control over what others do with the material they send into the chat.

NOTIFICATIONS AND FOMO

A drawback of large group chats is the sheer number of notifications they tend to generate. Every time someone sends a message, each member's device will be 'pinged' with an alert. This could result in hundreds of notifications a day. This is often highly distracting, and young people's fear of missing out (FOMO) can cause increased screen time as they try to keep up with the conversation.

Advice for Parents & Carers

CONSIDER OTHERS' FEELINGS

Group chats can become an arena for young people to compete for social status. This could cause them to do or say things on impulse which could upset others. Help children consider how people might feel if they behave in this way. If the child *does* upset someone, encourage them to reach out, show empathy and apologise for their mistake.

GIVE SUPPORT, NOT JUDGEMENT

Group chats are an excellent way for children to connect and feel like they belong. However, remind them that they can confide in you if they feel bullied or excluded, instead of responding to the person who's upset them. Validate their feelings and empower them by discussing how they'd like to handle the situation. You can also encourage children to speak up if they witness others being picked on.

BLOCK, REPORT AND LEAVE

If a child is in a chat where inappropriate content is being shared, advise them to block whoever sent the material, report that person to the host app or platform and exit the group. If any of this content could put a minor at risk, contact the police. Emphasise that it's OK for children to simply leave any group chat that makes them feel uncomfortable.

PRACTISE SAFE SHARING

In any online communication, it's vital for young people to be aware of what they're sharing and who might potentially see it. Ensure children understand the importance of not revealing identifiable details like their address, their school, or photos that they wouldn't like to be seen widely. Remind them that once something is shared in a group, they can't be certain where it might end up and how it might be used.

AVOID INVITING STRANGERS

Sadly, many individuals online hide their identity to gain a child's trust and serve their own ends – for example, to gather information on them, to exchange inappropriate content or to coax them into doing things they aren't comfortable with. Ensure the child understands why they shouldn't add people they don't know to a group chat – and why they should never accept a group chat invitation from a stranger.

SILENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Having a device bombarded with notifications from a group chat can be an irritating distraction – especially if it's happening late in the evening. Explain to children that they can still be part of the group chat while disabling notifications – and that it would be healthier for them to do so, avoiding a situation where they could feel pressured to respond.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

SN PCHAT

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

Snapchat is a messaging app which allows users to send images, videos and texts to others. Its best-known feature is that anything sent 'disappears' 24 hours after it's been viewed; however, users are known to take screenshots or use another device to obtain a photo of their screen. In 2023, Snapchat added a chatbot function called 'My AI'.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SCAMS AND BLACKMAIL

Predators can exploit Snapchat's disappearing messages feature by, for example, telling a user they have naked photos of them (regardless of whether it is true or not) and will share them online unless they send them money. Teens then (understandably) panic and worry about the long-term consequences. Snapchat's own research found that 65% of teenagers had experienced this – either on this app or others.

EXCESSIVE USE

Snapchat works hard on user engagement, with features like streaks (messaging the same person every day to build up a high score). The app also has sections called 'Discover' and 'Spotlight'. It claims the content shown here is relevant to each user, but it could also be seen as an easy way to hook users into watching videos endlessly. Furthermore,

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some content on Snapchat simply isn't suitable for children. The hashtags used to group content are determined by the poster, so even an innocent search term could still yield age-inappropriate results. The app's 'disappearing messages' feature also makes it easy for young people to share explicit images on impulse – so sexting continues to be a risk associated with Snapchat.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

My AI is Snapchat's new chatbot, which replies to questions in a human-like manner. However, the software is still in its infancy and has significant drawbacks, such as biased, incorrect or misleading responses. There have already been numerous reports of young users turning to AI for medical help and diagnoses, which could be inaccurate and therefore potentially dangerous.

ONLINE PRESSURES

Although many of Snapchat's filters are designed to entertain or amuse, the 'beautify' effects on photos can set unrealistic body image expectations – creating feelings of inadequacy if a young person compares themselves unfavourably with other users. Snapchat now also has 'priority' notifications (which still get displayed even if a device is in 'do not disturb' mode), increasing the pressure on users to log back in and interact.

VISIBLE LOCATION

A feature called 'SnapMaps' highlights your device's exact position on a virtual map, which is visible to other users. There are options to restrict who can see this information: all friends, selected friends or just you. Snapchat also has real-time location sharing, which is intended as a buddy system to help friends keep track of each other – but it could also be used to track a young person for more sinister reasons.

Advice for Parents & Educators

SET CONTROLS VIA FAMILY CENTRE

Snapchat has parental controls called 'Family Centre'. You must invite a child to the Family Centre for them to join. This allows you to view their friends list, see who they have chatted with in the last 7 days (but not to view the specific messages) and report any concerns.

CHAT ABOUT CONTENT

It may feel like an awkward conversation (and one that young people can be reluctant to have) but it's important to talk openly and non-judgementally about sexting. Remind children that once something's online, the creator loses control over where it ends up – and who else sees it. Likewise, it's vital that children understand that some 'challenges' which become popular on the platform may have harmful consequences.

TALK ABOUT REAL LIFE SCAMS

If a young person is mature enough to have Snapchat, then they are mature enough to have a conversation about scams, nudes and blackmail. Have this discussion before you let them join. Share some real-life examples. Discuss the importance of never adding strangers and discourage them from sharing nudes. If they are lured into a scam, encourage them to tell you immediately, then block and delete the predator and screenshot any evidence.

KEEP ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Profiles are private by default, but children may make them public to gain more followers. Snap Stories are visible to everyone a user adds unless they change their settings. On SnapMaps, their location is visible unless Ghost Mode is enabled. It's safest for a child to avoid adding people they don't know in real life – especially since the addition of My Places, which allows people to see where users regularly visit.

DISCUSS AI

Although My AI's responses can often give the impression that it's a real person, it's essential that young people remember this certainly isn't the case. Encourage children to think critically about My AI's replies to their questions: are they accurate and reliable? Remind them that My AI shouldn't replace chatting with their real friends, and that it's always better to talk to an actual person in relation to medical matters.

BE READY TO BLOCK AND REPORT

If a stranger does connect with a child on Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable through bullying, pressure to send explicit images or by sending sexual images to them, the child can select the three dots on that person's profile and report or block them. There are options to state why they're reporting that user – such as annoying or malicious messages, spam or masquerading as someone else.

5