Safeguarding Newsletter
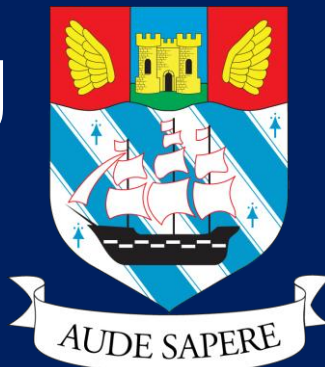
AUDE SAPERE

This half termly newsletter has been focused around general safeguarding matters and information to support families.

The Safeguarding Leadership Team

Mrs Wilkinson   Mrs West

You can reach the Safeguarding Leadership team at:

safeguarding@tggsacademy.org

As we approach the end of a shorter term, our thoughts naturally shift toward the upcoming summer months. With students spending more time outdoors, enjoying a break from school routines, or embarking on exciting adventures, we are reminded of the potential risks they may face. Therefore, we remain committed to raising awareness about the negative effects of technology on young people and the importance of navigating it mindfully.

Group Chats.

Despite our detailed correspondence to parents outlining the risks of group chats, we are finding that students across our cohorts continue to be part of groups with vast numbers of other users.

What is a group chat?

A group chat is a messaging feature that enables multiple users to communicate simultaneously at the same time.

What are the most popular sites children use for group chats?

WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, Signal, Facebook Messenger, Discord, Snapchat and Kik. More information about these apps can be found here - Chat apps | NSPCC

How many people can be added to a group chat?

Anything from 100 to 1024 depending on the application, we would not let this many people in our homes to see our children!

Mental Health Support Team.

As you know from previous letters, we partnered with the MHST back in February 2024. As we draw to our first academic year of working alongside the MHST, we reflect on the impact this service has had in our school.

We have strengthened our already excellent response to mental health through this service by –

Being able to offer students low level intensity cognitive behaviour therapy through specialist well being practitioners.

Having representatives of the MHST at parental events to give parents key information on how to spot the signs of low level mental health.

Having the opportunity to collaborate with our MHST colleagues on how we supported young people with their mental health, inclusive of promoting and having a focus on positive mental health strategies.

Contributions to our PSHE curriculum.

If you have any concerns about your childs well-being, you can find more information about the MHST here –

The Mental Health Support Team in Schools (MHST) - Children and Family Health Devon

The risks of group chats

- Children can be exposed to very inappropriate content.
- Children can be added without consent meaning up to **1024** people can see their phone number (if on WhatsApp) or username / handle if on other platforms.
- Children can be targeted within the group by others.
- Children can be removed and added to the group continuously which can increase their anxiety.
- Children can send an inappropriate and a high volume of messages that may cause offence to someone in the group.
- Whatever children contribute will be on their digital footprint forever.
- Children can be subjected to cyberbullying / child on child abuse.
- Children can be groomed as they do not know who else is in the group chat / who is responding to their messages.

How to manage settings to prevent being added to group chats.

- **WhatsApp:**

You can change your privacy settings to limit who can add you to groups. Options include allowing everyone, only contacts, or excluding specific contacts.

- **Instagram:**

You can restrict who can add you to groups by going to Settings > Messages and story replies > Message controls > Who can add you to groups.

- **Discord:**

You can limit friend requests and group chat invitations by adjusting your privacy settings. While there isn't a specific setting to disable friends from adding you to groups, you can unfriend users to prevent them from adding you.

- **Google Groups:**

You can prevent others from directly adding you to groups by unchecking the "Add me to their groups" option in your global settings.
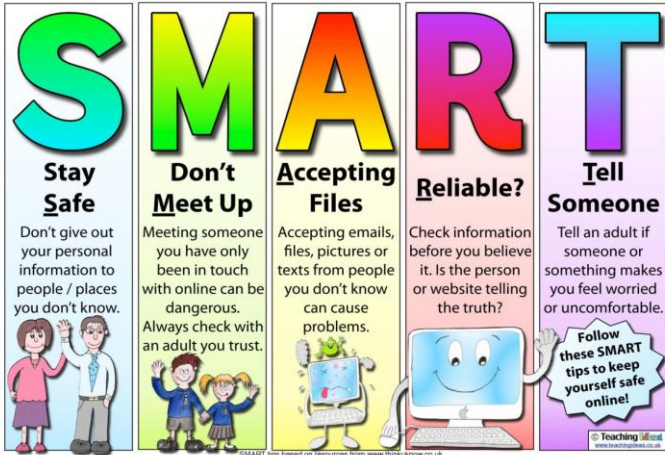
- **Other platforms:**

Many platforms allow you to block or mute individuals or groups, which can help reduce unwanted additions or messages.

The best thing that we can all do in response to this is to continue to stay up to date with current affairs, read key information shared by schools, the police, the government and **most importantly talk to your child about what they are viewing and doing online.**

It is highly recommended that you do not allow your child to have access to their mobile phone overnight in their bedrooms.

We advise that parents / carers check what their children are looking at every week. Do this together to build trust, and ask them to show you their social media accounts. This way you can see the content that appears and also see how your child interacts with their peers.

S Stay Safe — Don't give out your personal information to people / places you don't know.

M Don't Meet Up — Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Always check with an adult you trust.

A Accepting Files — Accepting emails, files, pictures or texts from people you don't know can cause problems.

R Reliable? — Check information before you believe it. Is the person or website telling the truth?

T Tell Someone — Tell an adult if someone or something makes you feel worried or uncomfortable.

Follow these SMART tips to keep yourself safe online!

SMART tips based on resources from www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Please encourage your children to be **SMART online.** If you have any concerns with any content your child has received, you can report this through the following sites:

[Report to CEOP](#)

[Report Harmful Content - We Help You Remove Content](#)

ONLINE SAFETY We constantly remind our students of their digital footprint. The average teenager spends up to 3 hours a day on their phone accessing social media. It is so important that parents use the advice in this newsletter to take an active role in ensuring children access the internet safely. We continue to publish advice through our website for our whole community. There is advice on our parent specific online safety page through our website.

[Torquay Girls Grammar School - Online Safety for Parents](#)

Knowledge is power

Sometimes students and their families go through significant changes that impact their well–being. This could be anything from losing a family member, separating as a family or a student starting to show the signs of poor mental health. Understandably some families choose not to inform us as a school and we fully respect this. We want to continue to remind parents that any information shared with the safeguarding team is confidential and as the students know, only the safeguarding team and your child's Head of Year would be aware of any information shared. If we have information that will support us to keep a watchful eye on your child and help them navigate any difficulties, then it can be very beneficial to them. There are times when we have not been aware of a key change to student's circumstances' and having this information would have helped us put appropriate support in for our students in a more timely fashion.

If a change in your circumstances due to a family separation, has led to financial changes, then you can follow the link below which signposts support to applications for free school meals. If your family qualifies for free school meals, the school is provided with funding under the government's pupil premium strategy, that we can use within our strategy to support their education and well-being. [Torquay Girls Grammar School - Free School Meals](#)

Summer holiday clubs and activities.

If your child is accessing a holiday club or one-off activity in the half term or the summer holidays then we advise (if they will left unaccompanied by a family member) that you ensure that the provider has done all relevant checks on any staff that may come into contact with your child.

The provider should have a safeguarding policy outlining the actions they have taken through safer recruitment and the processes they will follow to keep your child safe.

Below is a link to the statutory guidance that any 'Out of school settings' (OOSSs) must uphold.

[After-school clubs, community activities, and tuition - safeguarding guidance for providers](#)

Age Restrictions for Social Media Platforms

13 is the minimum age for account holders on these social media sites and apps.

Twitter · Facebook · Instagram · Pinterest · Messenger
Tik Tok · Discord · Snapchat · Twitch · Yubo
Reddit · YouTube · BeReal

Disclaimer: This resource/information is not intended to encourage social media use and we cannot accept any responsibility for pupils that sign up to social media sites after using this resource/information.

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Contacts if you are concerned about a child.

If you are worried about a child, or if you are a child worried about your own safety, or your query is of a safeguarding nature, please call the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub):

For Torbay residents call 01803 08100 or email mash@torbay.gov.uk

For out of office hours please call 0300 4564876

For Devon residents call 0345 155 1071 or email mashsecure@devon.gov.uk

If you or a child is at immediate risk, please call 999.

If you need support there is lots of helpful information such as websites available Here