Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to inform you that I, along with the Year 6 team, have spoken with all the Year 6 children about their use of social media and other online platforms. This follows our awareness of some inappropriate messaging on various WhatsApp groups and the sharing of unsuitable content online within the year group.

You will be aware of the ongoing national conversations about how to protect children's mental health by restricting access to social media for under 16s and implementing phone-free schools (which we are). While these discussions continue, it is clear that social media and online platforms are already a significant part of many of our children's lives.

We regularly talk to the children in Lifeskills lessons about online safety and, when asked during our Year 6 chat this morning, they were able to articulate many of the risks involved. However, as is often the case, this understanding does not always translate into sensible or safe choices when they are online.

We recognise that social media can have positive benefits when used appropriately. It can help children stay connected with friends and family, express themselves creatively and explore new interests. That said, most social media platforms have a legal age requirement of 13+ and children of primary school age require close support and supervision from school, parents and carers to help them navigate online spaces safely.

We would therefore strongly encourage you to work proactively with your child to support safe and responsible use of social media and online platforms. The NSPCC offers the following five key tips for parents:

- Review safety, wellbeing and privacy settings
- Check age ratings and platform features
- Talk openly and regularly about social media use (this would greatly support the work we do in school)
- Encourage safe and thoughtful sharing
- Support positive online experiences

In line with our Trust policy, where incidents occur on social media outside of school, we ask that parents and carers liaise with the academy so that we can work in partnership to address these appropriately. However, we do rely on parental support to monitor children's online activity in order to reduce the likelihood of incidents arising.

Please find below links to NSPCC guidance, which offers clear and practical advice for supporting children's online safety:

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

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-online-safety

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/free-online-safety-group-workshops/

Thank you for your continued support in helping our children's mental health and for enabling them to stay safe online.

Rebecca Hatrick
Deputy Head