

6 February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Over recent days, we have become aware of several large group chats involving students from our school in which unkind and hurtful comments have been shared. We are aware of this because some students felt safe and confident enough to speak to trusted adults at school. We are proud of those young people for coming forward, and we want to continue reinforcing that school is a place where concerns can be shared and taken seriously.

We kindly ask parents and carers to spend some time checking your child's phone and social media apps with them, paying particular attention to large group chats. Where possible, please encourage your child to leave chats that are negative, unkind, or overwhelming, and to avoid participating in conversations that could cause harm to others.



Yesterday, while attending a Reading Headteachers' meeting, we discussed this issue in line with recent government guidance. There was a shared view across local schools that smartphones for students under 16 are unnecessary and can contribute to a range of social and behavioural challenges. Many headteachers also agreed with recent government suggestions that social media use for under-16s should be restricted. It was felt that a simple 'brick phone' can be a more appropriate choice for younger students, allowing them to call and message without the added pressures and temptations of smartphone apps.


We recognise that online spaces can be difficult for young people to navigate, particularly when social pressure is involved. Conversations at home about kindness, respect, and knowing when to step away from online interactions can make a significant difference. It is especially important for children to know that they will not be in trouble for speaking up or asking for help.

In school, we are addressing this matter through our pastoral systems and reinforcing clear expectations around respectful behaviour, both online and offline. We will continue to support students who raise concerns and work closely with families where further action is needed.



Thank you for your ongoing support in helping us keep our community safe, respectful, and caring. If you have any concerns or would like further guidance, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,



**Andrew Hartley**  
Headteacher



**Jamie Rosser**  
Head of Year 8

