25 September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, we take great pride in creating a safe, respectful, and supportive environment where every student and staff member feels valued. To maintain this environment, we rely heavily on the strong partnership between our school and our families.

We are writing to address a growing concern that affects schools nationwide, and one that has recently surfaced within our own community. We have been made aware of several unauthorised social media accounts - primarily on TikTok- as well as private group chats where images, videos, and comments targeting students and, in some cases, staff are being shared. In many instances, the posts mock individuals or feature content deemed unkind.

While social media can be a space for creativity and connection, platforms like TikTok, WhatsApp, and Snapchat can also facilitate cyberbullying and harm psychological safety. To help us ensure our students remain safe and act responsibly online, we would like to highlight several critical areas regarding platform age limits, account safety, legal implications, and school expectations:

1. **Age Restrictions & Account Privacy Settings**

- Age Requirements: Please be aware that major social media platforms—including TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, and WhatsApp-have a strict minimum age requirement of 13. If your daughter is under this age, she should not have active accounts on these platforms under their terms of service.
- Private Accounts: For students who meet the age requirements, we strongly urge parents to ensure that all social media accounts are set to Private. Public profiles expose young people to unknown online audiences and make it significantly easier for photos and videos to be saved, re-shared, or used inappropriately without their knowledge.

2. **Legal Implications of Online Activity**

It is vital for young people to understand that the internet is not an anonymous or lawless space. Posting content, images, or commentary about others without consent can carry serious legal consequences:

- Harassment & Defamation: Creating accounts or posts that mock, target, or misrepresent students or staff can constitute offences under UK law (such as the Protection from Harassment Act and the Malicious Communications Act).
- Image Rights & Consent: Filming or taking photos of individuals-especially on school grounds—and sharing them online without explicit consent violates personal privacy and data protection principles.

- Police Involvement: Where online behaviour crosses the line into severe cyberbullying, defamation, harassment, or non-consensual sharing of images, schools are obligated to report the incidents to the police and external safeguarding agencies.

3. **School Sanctions & Consequences**

We hold our students to high standards of behaviour, both on school grounds and online when that behaviour impacts members of our school community. Any student identified as creating, maintaining, or contributing to accounts or group chats that target, mock, or harass staff or peers will face firm disciplinary action under our Behaviour Policy.

Depending on the severity and nature of the incident, school sanctions may include:

- Confiscation of mobile technology
- Detentions and internal isolation
- Fixed-term suspension or permanent exclusion
- Formal recording of the incident on the student's permanent educational record
- Reporting to the police if necessary

How Families Can Support at Home

We ask for your active partnership in addressing this matter with your daughter:

- Review Devices Regularly: Take time to regularly check your daughter's phone, active social media profiles, and group chats (e.g. WhatsApp, Snapchat). Ensure you know which accounts she manages or follows.
- Discuss Digital Footprints: Remind your daughter that online posts leave a permanent record that can follow her into higher education, apprenticeships, and future employment.
- Encourage Responsible Bystander Behaviour: Emphasize that liking, commenting on, or forwarding hurtful posts in group chats actively contributes to cyberbullying, even if she did not create the original post.

As a school, we are addressing these issues directly through our pastoral teams, assemblies, and PSHE/Computing lessons. Our goal is not to eliminate technology, but to guide our students toward using it safely, responsibly, and with kindness.

We deeply appreciate your prompt cooperation and continued support in keeping our school community safe and respectful for everyone.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your daughter's Head of Year.

Yours faithfully,

S Rodgers

Ms Rodgers
Interim Headteacher