




Social Media Concerns




Social media is a big part of our social and creative lives. Platforms such as Among Us, TikTok and Snapchat are fun to use and can be used to make connections with friends and family. Unfortunately, it has come to our attention that students in our school are using these platforms and uploading content publicly for anyone to see. It is our responsibility to ensure we protect our children from social media risks and are proactive to ensure internet safety.

Besides problems like cyberbullying and online predators, kids also can face the possibility of a physical encounter with the wrong person. Many newer apps automatically reveal the poster's location when they are used. This can tell anyone exactly where to find the person using the app. Photos, videos, and comments made online usually can't be taken back once they are posted. Even when a teen thinks something has been deleted, it can be impossible to completely erase it from the Internet.

Posting an inappropriate photo can damage a reputation and cause problems years later — such as when a potential employer does a background check. Sending mean-spirited messages, even as a joke, can also be very hurtful to someone else and even taken as a threat.

Social media platforms and functionality are always changing so it's a good idea to keep up to date with the social media your child uses. It is also important to remember that many social media platforms have age restrictions, which should be enforced.

Platform	Age Restriction	Concerns
Among Us 	10+ Age Restriction	A person who indicates they are under the age of 13 requires parental permission to activate their account, but there is no age-verification as part of the sign-up process. Like any game with a public chat function and a co-mingled environment, potential risks arise when adult strangers interact with children online. As such, 'private mode' is recommended for younger players, ideally with parental supervision.
TikTok 	13+ Age Restriction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kids can be targeted by predators;• It is easy to encounter inappropriate public content;• The conversations around mental health can be dangerous;• The nature of the app can increase child anxiety;• Users can become victims of cyberbullying;• There is limited privacy when it comes to user data.
Snapchat 	13+ Age Restriction	Snapchat photos and videos usually disappear within seconds but many smartphones can screenshot. There's nothing to stop the person reading it capturing an image of a Snap which will last forever and which can be shared online within seconds. Users can also submit snaps to the Snap Map, and their name and location will appear on a public map.

Instagram 	13+ Age Restriction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids can be targeted by predators; • It is easy to encounter inappropriate public content; • The nature of the app can increase child anxiety (wanting likes and followers etc); • Users can become victims of cyberbullying.
Minecraft 	10+ Age Restriction	<p>Minecraft can be played online on multiplayer servers, some of which can be quite violent and aggressive. Kids can get exposed to strong language, bullying, and even hate speech. If you want to allow your kid to play multiplayer, the best way to reduce the possibility of exposure to age-inappropriate language, content, and interactions is for them to join a "realm," an invitation-only personal Minecraft server</p>
Discord 	13+ Age Restriction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discord can be a platform for sexual exploitation; • It is a very difficult site to moderate; • Makes it easy for predators to contact children; • Cyberbullying is very easy on this platform.

What Can Parents Do?

It's important to be aware of what your children do online. The key is to stay involved in a way that makes your children understand that you respect their privacy but want to make sure they are safe.

Tell your children that it's important to:

- Make it clear that you expect them to treat others with respect, and to never post hurtful or embarrassing messages. And ask them to always tell you about any harassing or bullying messages that others post.
- Remind your children that what they post can be used against them especially if it is posted publicly.
- Teach children not to share anything on social media that they wouldn't want their teachers, future employers or family to see.
- Use privacy settings. It is important to go through them together to make sure your children understand each one. Also, explain that passwords are there to protect them against things like identity theft. They should never share them with anyone.
- Don't "friend" strangers. "If you don't know them, don't be friends with them." This is a plain, simple — and safe — rule of thumb.

Useful Websites:

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/social-media-and-safety>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/social-media-smarts.html>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents>

<https://bravehearts.org.au/about-child-sexual-abuse/online-safety-for-children-young-people/>

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/parentcyber.aspx>