Our Ref: CS/AP/Online Safety Letter

Date: Tuesday 20th October 2026

Dear Parent/Carer,

Dame Elizabeth Cadbury School
www.decschool.co.uk

We are writing to seek your vital support in addressing an issue that significantly impacts the well-being, focus, and safety of our students: online safety and the use of social media apps, specifically platforms like Snapchat and TikTok.

While digital technology offers fantastic ways for young people to connect, we have seen a rise in peer friction, distraction, and safeguarding concerns stemming from unfiltered app usage. Because these online interactions frequently spill over into the school day, affecting the learning environment and student mental health, we believe it is essential to work in partnership with you to keep our children safe.

**Our School Mobile Phone Policy**

To protect our learning environment and ensure student well-being, we enforce a strict **mobile phone policy** during the school day.

- **Arrival at School:** Upon entering the school gates, students must ensure their mobile phones are switched completely off (not on silent or vibrate).
- **During the Day:** Phones must be kept securely out of sight inside school bags or zipped pockets throughout the entire day, including during lesson times, registration, lesson transitions, break, and lunchtimes.
- **Consequences of Breach:** If a student has their mobile phone out, or if a phone rings or vibrates during the school day, the device will be confiscated immediately by a member of staff. Confiscated phones will be held securely in the main office and will only be returned to a parent or carer at the end of the school day.

**Key Concerns with Popular Apps**

- **Snapchat & "Streaks":** The pressure to maintain communication "streaks" and the fleeting, self-deleting nature of Snapchat messages often encourage impulsive behavior. Students often forget that content can be screenshotted and permanently shared.
- **Group Chat Fallout:** Large group chats often become breeding grounds for rumors, exclusionary behavior, cyberbullying, and inappropriate language, which can severely disrupt a student's ability to focus when they arrive at school.
- **Location Tracking:** Features like Snapchat's "Snap Map" broadcast a child's exact, live physical location to others, presenting significant privacy and safety risks.
- **Age Restricting:** Please note that most major social media platforms (including Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram) have a strict **minimum age limit of 13+**.

**How You Can Help at Home**

We strongly encourage you to actively engage with your child's digital life. Simple boundaries can make a profound difference:

1. **Enforce Device-Free Bedtimes:** An significant number of students report being awake past midnight on their phones. We highly recommend that all devices are handed to parents or left downstairs before bedtime to ensure a restorative night's sleep.
2. **Review Privacy Settings Together:** Ensure your child's accounts are set to **Private**.
3. **Utilise Parental Controls:** Use free, built-in tools like Apple Screen Time or Google Family Link to monitor app downloads, set daily time limits, and filter age-inappropriate content.
4. **Have Open Conversations:** Talk openly about the permanent nature of the internet. Remind them that sharing images, sending abusive text messages, or taking non-consensual screenshots of peers can have serious legal and school disciplinary repercussions.

**Excellent Free Resources for Parents**

If you are looking for practical, step-by-step guides on how to secure your child's phone or set up specific app boundaries, we highly recommend the following UK organisations:

- Internet Matters (internetmatters.org)**:** Offers tailored e-safety leaflets, screen time advice, and step-by-step device guides.
- UK Safer Internet Centre (saferinternet.org.uk)**:** Provides comprehensive advice on setting up parental controls and understanding social media safety.
- NSPCC Online Safety (nspcc.org.uk)**:** Offers expert guidance on how to start difficult conversations with your child about staying safe online.

Our core priority is to ensure that every student feels safe, respected, and ready to learn. Thank you for your continued partnership and support in fostering a focused and safe community for our young people.

Yours sincerely



Mr C Seager
Head of School