



Ms Sue Lovecy, Head of School

Dear Parents/Carers,

1 March 2024

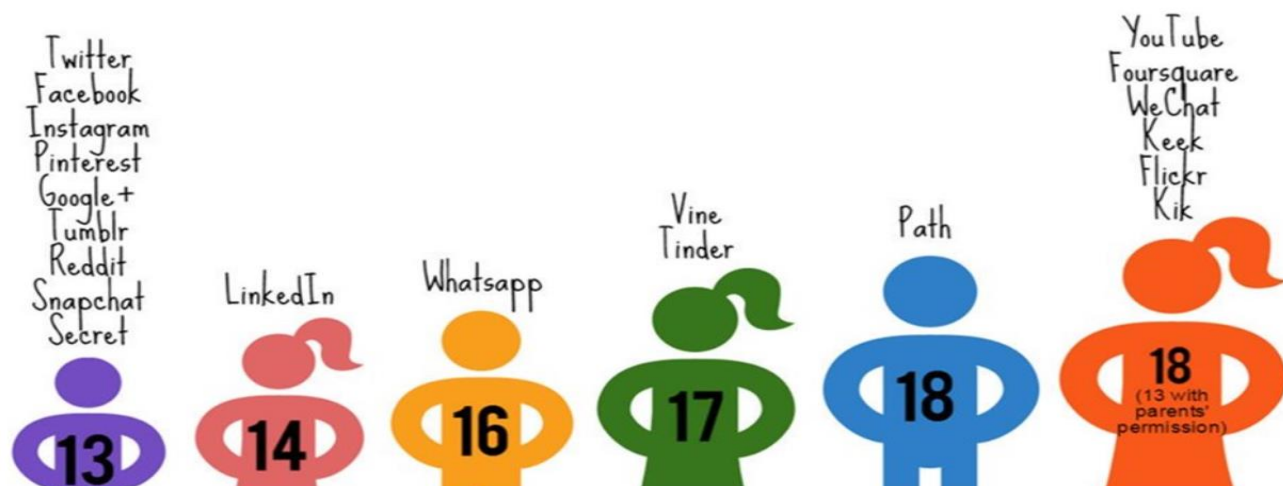
Phones and Social media issues

At St Martins School, we work very hard to teach the children about the safe use of the internet and social media, and we are confident that the children are all aware of what should and shouldn't be done "on line". They all know how to keep themselves safe from strangers online and also know what to do if they feel uncomfortable should they find themselves in a difficult position. However, the most likely and common danger posed is their *own* behaviour in messaging apps with their friends. We need your support in order to keep your children safe.

Despite being aware of obvious external dangers, allowing your children access to these apps leaves them wide open to receiving (and sending) abuse. Some of the messages can be innocent, ill-judged remarks, but some of them are malicious in nature, which can be recorded and is **permanent**. Your children are still learning how to communicate effectively and many do not possess the understanding of how messages can be misinterpreted, with meanings often being lost in translation – this is why there are age-limits on such apps, please see below. Your child may be a responsible, sensible and seemingly mature child, but they *all* lack the life experience necessary to navigate social interaction without making these mistakes.

At St Martins School we are happy to help resolve disagreements and upset between children that happen at school, but ultimately we **cannot**, and will not, be held responsible for social media messages sent between them – the solution to the issue of online abuse lies firmly at home, and parents must accept that the responsibility of children having access to and using these apps is your hands only. **I am therefore requesting that you delete these messaging apps.**, where appropriate. It is always disappointing to see upset affecting school life, and to see staff spend valuable teaching time dealing with avoidable issues that have arisen outside of the school's sphere of influence, which is why I am asking for your help.

Online mistakes, as mentioned earlier, can be permanent. We often see news story after news story about well-known personalities having their reputations irreparably damaged by dreadful tweets or messages from their past resurfacing: please do not allow your children to suffer the same fate of blundering into what can be seen as bullying behaviour. Please see age limits for social media platforms below:





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Mobile phones

I'm sure you have been following the national news about changes to government policy on mobile phones. Here at St Martins School we have had the same rules on phones for many years; in secondary, phones are allowed to be brought to school but must remain switched off in bags. If a student is seen with a phone in school we remove the phone and return it at the end of the day. From the start of year 6 students are allowed to bring their phones to school as many of them walk or cycle to and from school. Phones are handed to the class teacher at the start of the day and are collected at the end of the day.

Recently we have seen an increase in the number of students who are using their phone in school. This can be a serious safeguarding issue if they have photographed or videoed in school and can result in a suspension from school.

We will be modifying our school procedure after Easter. If a student has a phone visible or if a phone goes off in a bag the phone will be confiscated and placed in our office **until a parent collects it**. Please remind your child of this new rule as I'm sure that no parent will want the inconvenience of having to come in to school. We hope that this will further deter students from using their phones in school.

We will also be banning smart watches from school use after the Easter holiday, as these can now be used to access social media without the connection to a phone and can also cause distraction in lessons

We thank you for your consideration and support around this matter; these changes will help to continue to ensure our "pupils feel valued, happy and safe" (*Ofsted 2023*)

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Lovecy', written in a cursive style.

Sue Lovecy
Head of School