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Dear Parents

You may have read that WhatsApp is increasing the minimum age for a user to 16 in the wake of concerns about the use of and sharing of data. This is a useful prompt to share a reminder with you of the age limits for a number of widely used social media apps. Facebook & Messenger, Instagram, YouTube, Musical.ly and Snapchat all reference a minimum age of 13+. Please find attached a guide to some of the most popular social media channels.

In the Lower School we are at times concerned by the type of negative messages that some girls are sending to each other outside of school and this can then impact on their self-esteem and general happiness in school. In addition, we are noting the **volume** of messaging that is going on. Many group conversations consist of streams of comments of very little value, dominated by emoji's but which, nevertheless, put pressure on girls to engage and reply.

It is a soapbox of mine that we are in danger of creating a generation who cannot disconnect and who cannot occupy themselves either on their own or within the so-called 'confines' of a family group. It places considerable pressure on a student to receive a bombardment of multiple messages and it takes up a great deal of time to send them. All of the girls would be much better being active, being outside, reading a book, being with their family or simply being!

I would urge you to be 'unreasonable' in this matter and impose strict limits on device usage – especially as this activity often takes place in the evening. Phones etc really shouldn't be in bedrooms. I am very happy to be blamed for your decisions and I would also suggest referring to the stated age limits linked to the various apps. Ultimately we need to be teaching the girls sensible habits and how social media fits healthily into a balanced set of relationships, modes of communication and lifestyle. To achieve this it is necessary for adults to take the leading role rather than ceding control to the more natural user group.

Yours faithfully and good luck!

Rebecca Dougall  
Headmistress

## Useful resources

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>  
<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

### Instagram



Instagram is a picture and video sharing app to post content and use hashtags. Allows photo/video sharing, content sharing, messaging, live streaming, location sharing, online relationships.  
Minimum age according to Instagram 13+.

[ThinkUKnow Parents Guide to Instagram](#)

### Facebook & Messenger



Facebook is a social network which lets you create a page about yourself. Allows messaging, photo/video sharing, audio/video calling, content sharing, live streaming, location sharing, gaming.  
Minimum age according to Facebook 13+

[ThinkUKnow Parents Guide to Facebook](#)

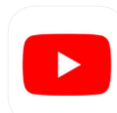
### Snapchat



Snapchat lets you send messages or 'snaps' to contacts which appear for up to 10 seconds. Allows live streaming, photo/video sharing, messaging, location sharing, content sharing, online relationships.  
Minimum age according to snapchat 13+.

[ThinkUKnow Parents Guide to Snapchat](#)

### You Tube



YouTube allows you to watch, create and comment on videos on a public profile. Allows photo/video sharing, messaging, live streaming.  
Minimum age according to YouTube 13+.

[ThinkUKnow Parents Guide to YouTube](#)

### Musical.ly



Musical.ly allows you to create, share and discover short videos. Allows messaging, live streaming, photo/video sharing.  
Minimum age according to Musical.ly 13+

[ThinkUKnow Parents Guide to Musical.ly](#)

### WhatsApp



Is an instant messaging app which lets you send messages, images and videos in one to one and group chats with your contacts. Allows messaging, audio/video calling, photo/video sharing, content sharing, location sharing, online relationships.  
Minimum age according to WhatsApp 13+.

[ThinkUKnow Parents Guide to WhatsApp](#)

Talking to your child about staying safe online <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-your-child-staying-safe-online/>