Derbyshire County Council

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Dear Parents/Carers,

Important Information About Student Group Chats and Online Safety

We are writing to raise awareness about the increasing use of group chats among young people and the potential risks that can arise when students are part of large online groups. Over recent months we have seen an increase in large sometimes full year group / multiple year group group-chats being created on messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Discord, and other social media applications to communicate with their friends. In some cases, students have been added to chats with other students that they are not friends with or with students from other school. While these platforms can be a positive way for young people to stay connected, they can also expose children to situations that may affect their wellbeing, safety, and reputation.

Potential Risks of Group Chats

Large group chats can sometimes become difficult to monitor and manage. Issues that commonly arise include:

- Bullying, teasing, or exclusion of students.
- Pressure to join in inappropriate conversations or activities.
- Sharing of offensive, discriminatory, or harmful comments.
- Circulation of rumours and gossip.
- Sharing of inappropriate images, videos, or content.
- Exposure to content involving alcohol, drugs, vaping, violence, or other risky behaviours.
- Messages being screenshot and shared beyond the original group.
- Conflicts that begin online and continue into school.

Many students may feel pressured to respond immediately to messages or participate in conversations to avoid feeling excluded. It is important for young people to understand that they have the right to leave a group chat if it makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

We encourage parents and carers to:

- Talk regularly with your child about their online activity.
- Know which apps and platforms your child is using. As a reminder, a lot of the applications have age restrictions, and your child should not be using them under 16.

- Discuss appropriate online behaviour and respectful communication.
- Remind your child that messages sent online can have lasting consequences.
- Encourage your child to leave any group chat where inappropriate content is shared.
- Report concerns to the platform and save evidence where necessary.
- Contact the school if online issues are impacting your child's wellbeing or relationships in school.

Key Messages for Students

- ☑ Think before you post.
- ☑ Never share personal information online.
- ☑ Treat others with respect.
- ☑ Do not share or forward inappropriate content.
- ☑ Speak to a trusted adult if something online makes you uncomfortable.
- ☑ It is okay to leave a group chat that is causing problems.

Online safety is a shared responsibility between school and home. By working together, we can help our young people develop the skills and confidence to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

If you have any concerns about your child's online safety or would like further advice, please do not hesitate to contact your child's student support lead or our safeguarding email address safeguarding@newmillsschool.co.uk

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs. Emma Adrio
Deputy Headteacher