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EDUCATIONAL TRUST**

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Principal: Mr Andrew Green BSc, MSc, MBA, MCGI, PGCE

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Dear Parent/ Carer

I am pleased to introduce myself as the Safeguarding Lead and welcome your young person to Copleston High School. Starting at a big new high school can be scary but is also a very exciting time. There will be lots of new people and experiences, vital stepping stones in the natural development through adolescence. There is a mountain of safeguarding resources that I could bombard you with, but in the interests of not overwhelming you, I have selected just one of the most prescient issues which affects our parents and young people joining us in Year 7.

ONLINE SAFETY AND THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The internet and technology are key parts of everyday life. There are many positives for everyone, including young people, but there are also many risks. We are aware that the move from primary school to secondary school is often the time that young people get their first phone, often a smart phone.

- Half of ten-year olds now own their own smartphone (Ofcom 2019)
- 70% of 12-15-year olds now have a social media profile, with Snapchat being the most prominent platform in this age group (Ofcom 2019)
- Children aged 5-15 now spend over 14 hours a week online, just over two hours a day (Ofcom 2019)

However, there is a choice. Your child does not need to have a phone and no student is expected to have one to attend. As well as the risk of exposure to harmful content, there is increasing evidence detailing the negative effects that access to social media has on; mental health, anxiety, attention spans, ability to socialise and physical health. If your child is in trouble or unwell, they can contact you via the office or pastoral team. There are also non smart or 'brick' phones which do not have the internet access increasingly coming onto the market if you want to have contact with them as they make their way to and from school. Resources to help with this can be found at <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/about->

Children regularly use different websites and apps from their parents, and it can be hard to keep up in this ever-changing digital world.

Here are some good conversations to have with your child:

- Talk about what they think is normal online and what behaviour to expect from others and from themselves.
- Encourage them to think critically and question what they see online. Talk to them about where they go to get information they trust, talk about fake news, fake followers and scams. Help them develop a healthy suspicion of whether people are who they say they are.
- Share your knowledge and experience of relationships. For example, sometimes people seem nice at first and then they turn out to be mean. Let them know that you know this, they can talk to you about it, and that you won't panic or punish them if they do.
- Show them how to report any worrying behaviour they see online – for example through [Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command](#) or the **Internet Watch Foundation**, or **CEOP**s.

The school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment

It is common for Year 7 children to be given their first phone as they join high school. In September, the Safeguarding Team always has a spike in issues surrounding phones and the new Year 7 students. The sending of nudes via crude catfishing techniques is particularly common and can lead to significant anxiety and distress in what is, already, a highly emotional time. Below are some things to check with your young people:

Do they know about the safety and privacy features of the apps they're using? Such as:

- Privacy settings. Are their accounts public or private?
- Do they know how to block and report? Are those features available?
- Can you turn features off, such as chat and in-app purchases?
- Do they know what personal and private information is, and what is and is not appropriate to share online?
- What are their profiles on their games and apps? What does the profile say about them? What does the image or avatar say about them?

Thank you very much for your attention to this and if you would like to talk about anything further then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards
HENRY PALMER
Designated Safeguarding Lead

To get further advice or information on this topic:

- NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>
- Social media checklists: <https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/checklists/>
- Smart phone free childhood: <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/about->

If you are worried you can also call:

[Stop It Now! helpline: 0808 1000 900.](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/)

NSPCC helpline 0808 800 5000

Childline on 08001111