

St Cecilia's

R.C. HIGH SCHOOL



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Dear parents/carers,

I am writing regarding the recent announcement that Instagram have increased the privacy and parental control on teenager accounts. This is a significant step in the right direction for safeguarding children online. **Earlier this year, an Ofcom study found that every single child it spoke to had seen violent material online, with Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat being the most frequently named services they found it on.** Social media companies are under pressure worldwide to make their platforms safer. The new “teen accounts” will contain more built-in protections for young people and will put more control and responsibility in parental hands.

I wanted to briefly outline some of the proposed changes, signpost you to further support and reiterate how we keep children safe in St Cecilia’s RC High School.

Features of the new “teen accounts” on Instagram

- privacy settings will be turned on by default for all U18 accounts
- young people must actively choose to approve all new followers
- their content can only be viewed by people who follow them (who they have allowed)
- children aged 13 to 15 will only be able to adjust the settings by adding a parent or guardian to their account
- strict controls on sensitive content to prevent recommendations of potentially harmful material, and muted notifications overnight

How will it work?

The effectiveness of these added safety features will rely on parents and children working together to keep themselves safe. Meta describes the changes as a “new experience for teens, guided by parents”. Parents who choose to supervise their child's account will be able to see who they message and the topics they have said they are interested in - though they will not be able to view the content of messages. The system will also rely on children being honest about their age.

Instagram’s latest tools put more control in the hands of parents, who will now take an even more direct responsibility for deciding whether to allow their child greater freedom on Instagram, and supervising their activity and interactions. Parents will also need to have their own Instagram account.

For further information and details from Instagram, please see the Instagram blog using the link/address below:

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<https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/instagram-teen-accounts>

How we keep our pupils safe whilst they are online at St Cecilia's RC High School

We only allow pupil to access the internet on our devices which have appropriate safeguard measures in place. We do this in three ways:

- **Mobile Phone Policy**; pupils are not allowed on their mobile phones during the school day
- our web **Filtering** system and online protection is called **Netsweeper**, this provides safe, filtered and logged web access for staff and students
- our **Monitoring** system is called **Smoothwall**; providing real-time online and offline monitoring, immediately reporting activity that may indicate risk to a portal which is monitored by the safeguarding team
- our **Learner User Agreement** (attached alongside this letter); essentially a code of conduct for students whilst using electronic devices in school. We would ask that parents/carers take some time to read through this with their child/children. It provides a good basis to establish online conduct/conditions at home. Pupils will be asked to sign a digital declaration acknowledging that they have read and understood the agreement.
- our **Online Safety Policy**; we have created this policy (available on our website) with the aim of ensuring appropriate and safe use of the internet and other digital technology devices by all pupils and staff.

How can you filter and monitor your child's online activity at home?

There are a variety of applications/software which help parents work with children to keep them safe online. I have signposted some for you to browse, should you wish.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/>

<https://uk.pcmag.com/parental-control-monitoring/67305/the-best-parental-control-software>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/monitoring-apps-parents-guide/>

<https://axis.org/resource/a-parent-guide-to-internet-filtering-monitoring/>

Furthermore, the NSPCC has a range of online safety resources to support and assist parents/carers which can be found by using the link below:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Yours sincerely,

Mr S. Hewitt

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Behaviour and Attitudes

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)