



The Importance of eSafety

An Open Letter to the Parents/Carers of our Senior Students

Dear Parents/ Carers of our Senior Students,

This open letter is intended to provide the parents/carers of our Year Five and Year Six students with the opportunity to open important discussions with your child/ren regarding eSafety.

The terminology **eSafety** refers to “*educating users to engage with safe online practice, when accessing digital devices to communicate, collaborate, and create content*”.

We are raising eSafety as a possible discussion point for your family because it has been brought to the attention of the Principal that senior students within our school are accessing ‘social media’ **outside of school hours**. Please be aware that the aforementioned accessing of social media *does not* involve all students, and therefore as a parent/carer you should make appropriate decisions as to whether a conversation with your child/ren is aligned with your family’s values.

In supporting you to determine if a family conversation is appropriate, we bring the following to your attention:

- ✓ **Snapchat** is being accessed by senior students across the network- within both senior primary school, and secondary schools. Should your child be engaging with Snapchat, they are at risk of being exposed to extreme language and offensive content. A feature of Snapchat is that users can be forcibly joined into conversations, chat groups, etc, regardless of consent. These chats or “snaps” are then designed to disappear once the user logs out; hence the evidence of cyberbullying is often unavailable after the event.
- ✓ **TikTok** is being accessed by senior students across the network- within both senior primary school, and secondary schools. A feature of TikTok is that users have unrestricted access to video images, and content which is not age appropriate. Offensive video content is often buried within ‘wormholes’ to which your child can be exposed to through links which they have previously accessed, or users whom they follow. Live video feeds also present many risks of exposure regarding the personal details of users.
- ✓ Students within both senior primary school, and secondary schools, are accessing many other social media apps, such as **Instagram, Facebook, Discord, Messenger, and ghost-messaging apps** which present similar risks of exposure to inappropriate content and cyberbullying.

It is important that you are aware that these social-media apps are being accessed outside of school hours; when adult-monitoring of digital devices may not be as explicit as during the school day. The Principal has been provided with screenshots of offensive content with time-stamps as late as 10:30pm-11:00pm at night, occurring across weekends and weekdays.

Therefore, we are prompting you to ask the question:

“Do you know what your child is doing online?”

Should you wish to open a family discussion regarding eSafety, please refer to the information below which may be of assistance:

- ✓ Upwey South Primary School explicitly addresses safe online practices through our school’s eSmart Accreditation, and directly through our curriculum delivery. All senior students are currently undertaking a series of cybersafety lessons through the eSafety program *“The Lost Summer”*

Refer to: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/classroom-resources/lost-summer>

- ✓ To confidently lead a family discussion which is based on reliable and factual evidence, refer to the following links:

eSafety Commissioner Parent Guide:

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents>

eSafety Commissioner The Big Issues to Discuss:

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues>

Commons Sense Media- App Reviews and Guides:

<https://www.common sense media.org/app-reviews>

You may be aware that our school has previously hosted in-person information evenings for parents/carers focussed upon Safe Online Practices. We are currently investigating a format through which we can again offer this information, in accordance to CovidSafe Guidelines.

As a community-minded school we wish to work with parents/carers to provide our students with safe online experiences. Therefore, parents/carers also have a part to play in monitoring the online actions of their child/ren outside of school hours.

Should you wish to raise any further discussion points regarding eSafety, please make contact with the Principal: damien.kitch@education.vic.gov.au

Kind regards,

Damien Kitch

Principal- Upwey South Primary School