



# THE PEGASUS ACADEMY TRUST



WHITEHORSE MANOR  
INFANT SCHOOL



ECCLESBOURNE  
PRIMARY SCHOOL



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BEULAH INFANT &  
NURSERY SCHOOL



CYPRESS  
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Executive Headteachers:

Mr M J Roberts & Ms L D Sampson

Head of Upper School: Mrs N Carpenter

Head of Lower School: Mrs J Sorensen

11<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## **Important - Social Media and the influence of Andrew Tate**

Dear Y5/6 Parent/Carers,

Over recent months the media have reported on growing concerns regarding social-media influencers, not solely but in particular when it comes to their potential impact on our children. You may already be aware of one such individual, Andrew Tate, who describes himself as "absolutely a misogynist".

It has since become clear that some children in Y6 are also familiar with Tate and the opinions he supports. Whilst some of Tate's posts appear to focus on wellbeing and mental health, they are interspersed with **deeply misogynistic, sexist, homophobic, and violent material**.

Given the nature of his views, he does not represent a positive role model for boys or young men of any age and yet many still have questions about Tate's messages and his values. His content and posts have been removed and banned from many social media platforms, following a successful campaign by UK-based advocacy group Hope Not Hate. However, the banned material is potentially still accessible by young people with a TikTok account or via an internet search.

These videos are circulating on many platforms, but in particular on TikTok, and the aftermath often plays out on WhatsApp and other various social communication platforms.

**TikTok is a video-sharing platform where you can watch and create videos, and livestream. The app has an age-rating of 13+.** Users can set up multiple accounts to share or browse different videos on TikTok via a personalised feed known as the 'For You Page'. As all pupils in Year 6 are below the age of 13, their having an account is entirely at the discretion of you, their parents.

The age ratings on social media and messaging sites work much like the age ratings on films and games. However, whilst most parents would be cautious about their 11-year-old child watching a 15 certificate movie, or playing a PEGI 16 game, it seems that this caution is not always applied to social media or messaging sites such as TikTok or WhatsApp, which are often seen as harmless 'fun' or a way for children to communicate with each other for free.

**This is a great shame as it puts children at immediate and extreme risk of receiving and sending videos and messages which are highly inappropriate. It makes them vulnerable to all manner of bullying, abuse and negative ideas.** Quite apart from this incident, the news is full of stories of young people doing themselves irreparable damage or worse by following 'TikTok' trends. By accessing social media and messaging platforms such as TikTok and WhatsApp (**which has an age rating of 16+**), children are subjected to a never-

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ending barrage of outside influence via their phones, directly into their homes, which is far more damaging to mental health and well-being than any game or movie that can just be turned off.

At school we keep your children safe online in a number of ways. Our staff are vigilant and will share and respond to concerns they have about students who we believe are potentially being influenced by inappropriate and offensive views. Children gain access online via our Google GSuite managed learning platform which utilises a safeguarding program called 'Securely' which alerts Designated Safeguarding Leads to any worrying searches or attempts to access blocked sites. We can certainly protect your children from TikTok and harmful messages proliferated from the site when they are in school, on a school device, or when they go online using their GSuite account. But school systems can't protect them when they are at home with you on their own personal devices.

Nor do children have access to their phones in school during the school day. Year 6 pupils have the privilege of bringing their phone into school on the proviso that it is turned off on school premises and handed in to staff when they enter the school building. They have their phones for their journey to and from school, so you can keep track of them, in preparation for their transition to secondary school. The children are all well-educated on keeping themselves safe online.

All students receive Relationships & Sex Education as part of our planned curriculum which addresses issues such as misogyny and gender stereotypes. We promote diversity, inclusivity, mutual respect and tolerance through themes presented throughout the curriculum. We are also spending additional time addressing promotion of dangerous ideas online disguised as solutions or well-considered thought, including the ideology of Andrew Tate.

At a time when so many people think it acceptable to use social media for spreading provocative and inflammatory untruths, it is more important than ever that home and school work in partnership to challenge this and other forms of hate speech. **To support this home-school alliance we would ask that children are closely monitored on the apps that you allow on their smart phones, and that apps with age-ratings are adhered to, to minimise the risk to children. If appropriate, please do speak to your child about what they read and see online and engage in healthy discussion about the harmful nature of some information that can be found on the internet.**

Thank you for your support in this matter

Yours sincerely,

Nikki Carpenter  
Head of School (Upper)

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