



## **BALGOWNIE PUBLIC SCHOOL**

*Living & Learning*

PO Box 192, Fairy Meadow 2519

Tel: (02) 4284 4245 Fax: (02) 4284 3462

E-mail: [balgownie-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:balgownie-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au)

Principal: Aloma Stewart

Dear Parents and Carers,

Our school is strongly committed to the safety and well being of our students. The advent of social networking sites such as TikTok, Instagram, Snap Chat, YouTube and Facebook add a dimension to our lives that was not around when we were children. Staying in touch with friends and family is now easier than ever before. Young people are using online communication to build friendships, share their lives and work together. There may be many advantages to such sites but there are also some potential concerns that need to be considered. Most of them allow for some form of posting film clips or images, commenting on posts, messaging or group chats.

Our school has many students who use social networking sites. Many sites have age restrictions. As parents you may not be aware that your child has signed up to these sites and falsified their age to do so. Technically no child of primary age is 13 and thus should not have access to age restricted sites.

It is not the school's role to interfere in decisions being made by families around their children's use of the internet. As a school we are however concerned that children may be putting themselves at risk, by not understanding the safety concerns associated with the improper use of social networking sites. Sometimes, we as parents are not fully aware of the extent which our children are using social media.

I respect families' choices in these decisions and urge parents to be informed about what social media your child is engaging with, and have discussions with your children about what they are posting, and to whom. You may be surprised with the extent that your child is interacting with people online- these may be friends or people they have not met. Our children are quite innocent and the urge to have many friends can be alluring. Please take the time to sit with your children and discuss the fun part of social media and how to keep themselves safe.

As parents, we need to help our children navigate this digital world. It is common to worry about their safety, but by setting boundaries and expectations, you can help guide their use. When approaching a conversation with kids about social media, it's important not to have an "us-versus-them" attitude. Understanding and accepting that different generations use technology differently is a good starting point. It provides opportunities for understanding each other as technology users, to be more aware of when issues arise, and how to guide children to positive and empowering uses of technology.

I have also included some websites where you can find out more, some questions you may wish to use when talking with your children and also some basic conditions and guidelines for social media use. These are not exhaustive, but may be of benefit. Never easy being a parent – many would think it is getting more difficult all the time! Please come and see myself or our leadership team, if you would like further information.

Regards

Aloma Stewart  
October 2019



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### Helpful websites

**eSafety Commissioner website** <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

**Digital citizenship** <https://www.digitalcitizenship.nsw.edu.au/>

### **Benefits of social media**

<https://theconversation.com/when-it-comes-to-kids-and-social-media-its-not-all-bad-news-80547>

### **What are some questions that we could use to talk with our children about social media?**

- What sites are you using and how do you use them?
- Can you show me the site and tell me about it? Can you show me your profile?/account?
- How many accounts do you have?
- What are the features of the site?
- What settings are you using? Are you making your sites private?
- Have you disabled the location function?
- What are your passwords?
- What do you post online?
- Who can see this content?
- Who are your friends – do you actually know them?
- How many friends do you have? (ie they may have many 'friends' eg 600+ but cannot possibly know them.)
- How do people comment?
- How do you comment?
- Have you had any yukky comments? If so, how did you deal with them?
- If people you know are making horrible comments to another person, what do you do? What could you do? (Tell them to stop, block them etc, unfriend them, join in....)

These questions may help you understand what sites your children are on and how they are interacting with the world. We need to guide our children to firstly be safe themselves and to also help them become good digital citizens. For example, to not engage in cyber bullying or being negative in what they write.

**Keep the Log On Details and private information Private** The use of your profile depends on who knows the password. Things written on a site remain archived and while the writer may delete the details there is a record of those conversations. Some people trust websites too much and forget that millions of people can look at the private information they post; this includes criminals looking for their next victim. Social networking sites are the new browsing grounds for identity thieves. There is a saying – Once on the internet, forever on the internet.

**Beware of Child Predators** Child predators have taken over chat rooms and social networking sites. These adults will search sites for unsuspecting youngsters, and pose as children/teenagers themselves. They will get to know the young person, and then eventually try to meet him or her offline.



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**Strangers are Still Strangers** When you meet someone for the first time offline, you may have a difficult time knowing if the person really is who he or she claims to be. The online world is no different. The online world is ideal for people who enjoy over exaggerating their life, or making up a completely different one from their own. This is a frightening thing for parents to hear, but parents can cut down on the risk by monitoring your children.

**Increases Internet Addiction** Social networking sites are fun and addictive. Meeting new people, catching up with old friends, and visiting interesting profiles can take up hours each day. You may spend more time on social media than studying, which contributes to lower grades.

**Cyber bullying and inappropriate interactions.** Children who are at Primary school may not fully understand the implications for their posts and videos and the effects it can have on others. Things in writing can often be very hurtful. Please talk to your child in regards to this.

### Some basic information about some social media platforms.

#### **Is your child legally old enough to sign up and do you know what he or she is doing on the internet?**

TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, Youtube, and Instagram set a minimum age limit of 13 for users to register.

#### **TikTok (formerly known as musical.ly)**

Lip-syncing and dancing videos are the most popular genres on the platform. Just like Youtube, **TikTok** is an interactive app where you can connect with friends, comment on videos and follow other people on the platform. Some kids have gained popularity and fame using this app

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xva0gl3q7o8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQEGJMmqBTw>

<https://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/what-families-need-know-about-tiktok/>

Is TikTok appropriate for children?

- When signing up on TikTok, user profiles are made 'public' by default. This means anyone can view videos that your children upload, send direct messages to them and access their location information.
- Popular TikTok uploads emphasize today's top music which means that some of the lyrics may contain swearing and sexual content that is not appropriate for children.
- Some of the music videos have mature content that feature revealing outfits and inappropriate dance moves.
- A report by ABC news found that the messaging feature in the app could enable strangers to send direct messages to children.

#### **Snapchat**



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**Snapchat** is a popular messaging app that lets users exchange pictures and videos (called snaps) that are meant to disappear after they're viewed. It's advertised as a "new type of camera" because the essential function is to take a picture or video, add filters, lenses or other effects and share them with friends.

[Everything you need to know about Snapchat https://m.phys.org › news › 2018-06-snapchat](https://m.phys.org › news › 2018-06-snapchat)

### Community Guidelines

- Never post, save, or send nude or sexual content involving anyone under the age of 18 — even of yourself.
- We have zero tolerance for bullying or harassment of any kind.
- Don't send a Snap with the intention of making someone feel bad. If someone blocks you, don't try to contact them from another account.
- Don't take Snaps of people in private spaces — like a bathroom, locker room or a medical facility — without their knowledge and consent.
- If someone is in your Snap and asks you to remove it, please do!
- When playing a game, don't harass other players or deliberately ruin the fun by playing in an unintended way.
- Never threaten to harm a person, a group of people, or someone's property. Encouraging violence is prohibited on Snapchat.
- Don't pretend to be someone you're not — this includes your friends, celebrities, brands, or other organizations — or attempt to deceive people about who you are.

### Basic Terms of Instagram – from the site. ( abridged)

1. You must be at least 13 years old to use the Service.
2. You may not post violent, nude, partially nude, discriminatory, unlawful, infringing, hateful, or suggestive photos or other content via the Service.
3. You are responsible for any activity that occurs through your account and you agree you will not sell, transfer, license or assign your account, followers, username, or any account rights.
4. You are responsible for keeping your password secret and secure.
5. You must not defame, stalk, bully, abuse, harass, threaten, impersonate or intimidate people or entities and you must not post private or confidential information.
6. <http://help.instagram.com/customer/portal/articles/262387-community-guidelines>.
7. Violation of these Terms of Use may result in termination of your Instagram account. You understand and agree that and you use the Service at your own risk. If you violate the letter or spirit of these Terms of Use, we can stop providing all or part of the Service to you.

### From Facebook Safety Center (abridged)

**Playing It Safe** How you present yourself on Facebook says a lot about who you are—just like what you say and do at school or with your friends. In all public places, online and off, it's important to represent yourself as the kind of person you want to be.

**The Importance of Being You** Facebook is a community where people use their real names and identities, so we're all accountable for our actions. It's against the [Facebook Terms](#) to lie



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about your name or age. Help us keep the community safe by reporting fake profiles to Facebook if you ever see them.

**Think Before You Post** It's easy to get caught up in the moment and write or do something that may seem hilarious at the time. But remember, what you say can really hurt someone, or come back to haunt you. Think before you post. It only takes a second or two. Ask yourself if you really want to say it. Make sure you don't mind if your friends, classmates, or teachers hear about it later.

Also remember that any information you post – whether in a comment, a note, or a video chat – might be copied, pasted, and distributed in ways that you didn't intend. Before you post, ask yourself - would I be OK if this content was shared widely at school or with my future employer? At the same time, we all make mistakes. If you find yourself wishing you hadn't said or done something, it's never too late to apologize.

**Don't Talk to Me Anymore** If you ever receive hurtful or abusive messages or posts on your profile page you have options. Depending on how serious the situation is, you can ignore it, ask the person to stop, unfriend or block the person, or tell your parents, a teacher, a counselor, or another adult you trust. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.

**Report Abusive Content** Be sure to always report abusive content—whether it's on your profile page, or someone else's. You can also report inappropriate Pages, Groups, Events and fake or impostor profiles. (Remember that reporting is confidential, so no one will know who made the report.)

**Be authentic. The real you is better than anything you might pretend to be.**