



# Digital Bulletin – WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a mobile messaging app which allows users to exchange messages using existing phone contacts without having to pay text message fees. WhatsApp Messenger is available on most mobile devices including iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia. WhatsApp users can create groups and send each other unlimited images, video and audio messages.

## Age Restriction

As of May 2018, WhatsApp's **minimum age of use is 16 years old** if you live in the European Union, or a country that has adopted the GDPR, as the UK has. It was previously 13 and WhatsApp has not yet said what will happen to users between 13 and 16 who already held accounts under the old terms and conditions.

## Group Chats

WhatsApp also contains a group chat function. The feature lets users chat with up to 100 people in one conversation stream. Each group is set up by one contact who becomes the group admin – they're the only user who can add or remove participants and change/add new group admins. Group conversations usually take place between friends. But sometimes, users can be added to a group where they don't know everyone else. Even if fellow users in the group aren't contacts, they will still be able to see messages your child posts in the group, and your child will be able to see theirs. Likewise, if they're added to a group with someone they've blocked, the blocked person will be able to contact them there.

At Reigate Grammar School, we discourage the use of WhatsApp group chats for school activities involving students below the Sixth Form. School email should be the primary method of communication within school. As discussed in the previous Digital Bulletin on Cyberbullying, students are responsible for their online content and are accountable for comments made across all social media platforms. Students are expected to be respectful to each other and will be subject to school sanctions if their comments and content can be construed as cyberbullying.

## Privacy Settings

WhatsApp's default privacy setting allows any other WhatsApp user to view your profile photo, status and when you were last using the app. You can specify that your child's WhatsApp account (when they were last online, profile photo, status) can be seen by:

**Everyone** - all WhatsApp users.

**My Contacts** - the contacts from their address book only. This is the recommended option for most users.

**Nobody** – the account is completely private

Privacy settings are accessed here:

**WhatsApp > Settings > Account > Privacy**

## Live Location

WhatsApp shows other users your location. You can turn this off under **Settings > Privacy** within the app, or turn off background location under **Location Settings** on whichever devices WhatsApp is being used on.

## School Support

If you are concerned about your child, please make contact with the school and speak with either your son/daughter's Form Tutor or Head of Year. You can also speak with Miss Arthur (Deputy Head) or myself as Online Safety Coordinator.

If there are any topics that you would like more information about, or if you have any concerns regarding online safety, please feel free to contact me.

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