

11 March 2019

Dear parent/carer

Too frequently, our work to make sure children are safe and happy in school is made more challenging by social media.

Despite all of the work we do in schools - both primary and secondary - there always seems to be some children who are happy to post and spread rumours, gossip, and even threats, over the internet.

The consequences of just one message, possibly sent 'in confidence' to a 'trusted' friend can be unbelievably harmful. Posts are shared and commented on, involving more and more people and causing more and more hurt and embarrassment for those being discussed.

Just like with 'fake news', totally unfounded accusations can be made, distributed and taken as truth by many who read them.

A recent such incident was caused when an anonymous, typed letter was found in school. The appalling contents of the letter were photographed and posted on line by the pupil who found it - not the person who wrote it. This irresponsible and dangerous act has caused just as much of a problem as if that pupil had written the original letter themselves.

I am therefore writing to be clear on how any similar issues will be dealt with in the future, to ask for your help in monitoring your child's online behaviour and to offer some guidance on how to do this.

Consequence for Malicious Posts

In future, anyone found to be sharing or posting materials that are hurtful and embarrassing to others, may be dealt with as if they were the original author of those materials.

In addition to sanctions in school - that may include isolation or exclusion - the police are likely to be informed. As an adult, a conviction for Malicious Communication carries up to 5 years in prison.

Minimum Ages for Social Media Sites and Apps

As we informed you in our letter of 25 January 2019, social media sites and apps all have a minimum age. Unfortunately, many children below this age are still accessing and using these sites and apps. Your vigilance and support in making sure our pupils - your daughters - are not using these sites or apps before the appropriate age is essential. /PTO

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- We strive to fulfil everyone's learning potential. • We value high standards, hard work and a ceaseless desire to improve.
 - We provide a safe, kind, nurturing and inclusive environment. • We enjoy the journey together.



For your reference, the minimum age to open an account on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat is 13.

The minimum age for WhatsApp is 16.

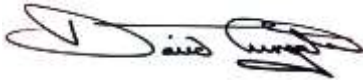
YouTube requires account holders to be 18, but a 13-year-old can sign up with a parent/carer's permission.

Parental Control App, OurPact

Finally, I do appreciate how difficult it can be to monitor your child's time and activity on line. There are free to use parental control apps that can help you with this, such as OurPact (www.ourpact.com).

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours faithfully



Mr D Tungate
Principal

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