

11th June 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

Social Media

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc.) has had widespread impact on the way in which we communicate and express our thoughts and opinions. There are clearly many benefits for us both as individuals and also as communities. Unfortunately, we are also experiencing an increasing number of situations where social media has been the vehicle for inappropriate behaviour by both students and parents. We live in a society where we are proud of our right to freedom of speech and would not wish to suggest that this should be curtailed in any way. There are occasions however, when things said in the virtual world are at best unhelpful and, at worst, may constitute harassment, bullying or intimidation which could ultimately lead to Police involvement.

There have been a growing number of situations where schools have had to deal with pupils using social media to be unkind to others. What starts as something seemingly harmless takes no account of how those on the receiving end might feel, nor does it recognise how quickly things can get out of control and become extremely unpleasant. Whilst things are most likely to have taken place off the school site and outside school hours, the resulting 'fallout' in such situations can have major implications for harmonious relationships within school and a resulting negative impact on teaching and learning.

Most social media sites set age restrictions. Facebook, for example, sets an age restriction of 13 years of age for users of its site. However, there is no verification and younger children often ignore the terms and conditions of use, unaware of the risks this might pose. Something to remember is that if your child is using false information to obtain an account on a social media site other people can do so as well.

Most social media sites allow users to set their profiles to 'private' for viewing only by approved contacts. By not using these settings users can put themselves at risk. Children and young people can also put themselves, and others, at risk when they:

- Upload inappropriate, offensive or even illegal content to their own online spaces
- Post material that could damage their reputation or the reputation of others
- Post inappropriate comments on other people's profiles that is humiliating or results in bullying
- Accept friend requests or engage in chat with people who they do not know.

Unfortunately, some parents and carers can also put themselves at risk when posting online about incidents that may have taken place at school. Cases of inappropriate comments to and about others, inaccuracies and misrepresentation are now commonly reported in the media and will be taken seriously by the school. Comments made online are not safe and secure and should never be considered as such, even if they are in a private group. We need to set the best example for our children so we would urge you to think before you type/post and also consider the school's Home-School Agreement. If you, as parents and carers have any concerns about matters taking place at school, please address them through the appropriate channels, i.e. a discussion with the form tutor, Head of Year or member of the Senior Leadership Team, rather than

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expressing your concerns online. This allows us to work with you to address any concerns that you may have. As a school, we will aim to respond to any communication **within 24 hours** (Monday-Friday).

We expect our children to be polite and respectful both inside and outside of school hours. However, whereas we can closely monitor this **at** school, we are powerless when it comes to their social media usage which happens entirely out of school hours. As such, we are urging you to work alongside us and to be aware of the following guidelines and take action, where necessary:

- Please consider banning certain social networking sites or limiting your child's usage. We would advise that phones are removed from bedrooms at bed time.
- Whether you allow your child to use certain sites or not, have a conversation with them about appropriate use, including how the anonymous or instantaneous nature of online communication can change the way people behave.
- Please ensure that, where possible, your child adjusts privacy settings so that posts on social networking sites are only seen by those they choose.
- Please supervise your child's activities online especially on social networking sites. At a minimum, you should have their username/password for sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and sit down with them from time to time to monitor what is happening online.
- If your child experiences or witnesses online bullying tell them not to respond. The best option is to take a print out or screen shot of the offending post and then delete the "app" and the account.
- Please report incidents of online bullying to us or encourage your child to do so. Reports can be made to any member of staff in school and will be followed up by the Form Tutor and Inclusion Team.
- Further advice on what to do in case of abuse can be found here: <http://ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/Parents>

Whilst we are not always able to identify the authors of offensive comments or questions posted anonymously, the Police are able to do so and we will contact them about anonymous bullying internet activity which is directed at any pupil at Broadstone Middle School. Any child from this school who is found to have posted offensive or abusive comments online will be dealt with seriously. We do not tolerate bullying by any means at this school.

For further information and guidance, please consult the following websites:

[http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/about/helpline;](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/about/helpline)

www.childnet.com/youngpeople

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Lastly, we are very aware that the vast majority of you do the right thing and we're grateful for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Mrs D Wilks
Headteacher