



Our Ref: JWT/gdo/socialmedia

January 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians

Re: Social Media usage

Recently, we have seen a rise in the number of incidents outside of school, involving the inappropriate use of social media. We have found that staff are spending an increasing amount of time dealing with these incidents, which are often outside of our control and very difficult to rectify after the event.

When incidents involving the inappropriate use of social media occur outside of school, we would expect parents to support their child by:

- reporting the issue to the social media networking site or messaging app or,
- contacting the police on 101, if they feel a crime has been committed.

On occasions, parents have contacted school to report their child has been the target of bullying online. Cyberbullying is defined as the use of information and communications technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the Internet, to deliberately upset someone else. Although cyberbullying is not a specific criminal offence in UK law, criminal laws such as the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 may apply, in terms of harassment or threatening behaviour.

When a child is the target of cyberbullying, they can feel alone and misunderstood. It is therefore vital that, as a parent, you know how to support your child if they are caught up in cyberbullying. The guidance sheet below provides information about how parents can prevent and respond to cyberbullying.

Social media is also a good example of how online behaviour can present e-safety risks. Most social media networking sites and messaging apps set age restrictions for their users. For example, Snapchat and Instagram set an age restriction of 13 years of age. The minimum age for using WhatsApp is 16 years of age. However, there is no age verification when users create accounts on these messaging apps and younger children often ignore the terms and conditions of use, unaware of the risks this might pose.

Through assemblies and PSHE lessons, we will continue to raise our students' awareness of online safety and the responsible use of social media. I would be grateful if you would engage in a conversation with your child about their own use of social media and how they should behave responsibly to avoid causing offence to others.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter and for your support in helping to keep our students safe online.

Yours sincerely

Mr J White
Assistant Headteacher

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Cyberbullying – Guidance for Parents and Guardians

To help prevent cyberbullying, you should:

- Be aware of what cyberbullying is and how it can happen by looking at helpful [Internet sites](#)
- Agree on family rules and procedures about what to do if someone is being cyberbullied, such as saving the message or text as evidence and telling a trusted adult
- Explore, with your child, the online technologies and websites they like to use
- Have your child show you, or learn together, how to block someone on social media or how to report abuse to a website or service provider
- Encourage positive use of technology by helping your child to use it to support learning, socialise with peers and explore the wider world
- Discuss and promote 'netiquette' – responsible online behaviour – and reward your child for this
- Tell them 'netiquette' means they should:
 - ✓ Respect others online – treat them how they would want to be treated
 - ✓ Only post or write things online and in text messages that they would be happy for anyone to see
 - ✓ Use appropriate language when chatting or playing games online
 - ✓ Pay close attention to a website's terms and conditions and make sure they are old enough to be using a site or online service
- Support your child in making responsible decisions on the Internet and when using a mobile phone – make sure they are aware of the types of photos and other content that are appropriate to post online (e.g., no photos in a school blazer or PE kit)
- Be aware that, as well as being at risk, your child could also be involved in cyberbullying
- Be alert to changes in your child's behaviour - especially after using the Internet or their mobile phone
- Discuss the emotional impact of bullying on another person
- Encourage your children to keep passwords safe
- Consider installing a parental control app on your child's devices (e.g., [Kidslox](#))

When responding to cyberbullying, you should:

- Support and encourage your child, if they tell you they've been cyberbullied – reassure them that it's not their fault and that they've made the right choice by reporting it to you
- Tell them that bullying is not acceptable and inform them of what you will do next
- Make sure your child does not retaliate or reply to cyberbullying messages of any kind
- Help your child to save evidence of cyberbullying - use tools to 'screenshot' messages on mobile phones or the 'print screen' button on your computer
- If you need to, you can help your child to change their contact details (email, online username, mobile phone number) to prevent further bullying - denying them access to the technologies is not the answer.
- Report the issue to the social media networking site or messaging app
- Contact the police on 101, if you feel a crime has been committed

For further support and advice, you can contact the following organisations:

- [Bullying UK](#) 0808 800 2222
- [Childnet International](#)
- [The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre \(CEOP\)](#)
- [Family Lives](#) 0808 8002 222
- [Kidscape](#) 0207 8235 430
- [Child Law Advice](#) 0300 330 5480
- [Childline](#) 0800 1111
- [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#)
- [Oldbury Wells School](#)