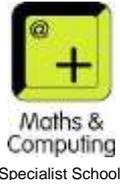




Putteridge High School

Putteridge Road Luton LU2 8HJ

Headteacher: Mr David Graham



DGr/ap
PA Office

May 2016

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to you to explain a little about the school's attitude and policy on the explosion of social media that is occurring in our society. We know from our discussions with other schools, that this is a nationwide issue. You have probably seen many cases reported too in the media. Recently, we have been made aware, by both students and parents, of incidences of misuse of social media, sometimes by our students and other times where our students have been the victims of misuse.

I wanted to assure you that if any aspect of ICT is misused in the school on our equipment, or if there is any misuse of the school email system either in or out of normal school hours, then, due to the filters in operation, we will identify and address this misuse. Fortunately, this type of misuse is incredibly rare and this is helped by the fact that students are not easily able to access social media sites on our network.

Indeed, most of the inappropriate use of the internet is done from home or on students' mobile devices during evenings, weekends and holidays. A child may put themselves at considerable risk due to the misuse of social media accidentally. We along with many other schools, have a number of growing concerns. These concerns include (it is not an exhaustive list):

- The sharing of personal information in which students can provide potentially dangerous or damaging personal information without a full understanding that what is posted in social media communities is public, is potentially permanent and accessible to many more than the user intends
- Addiction, whereby the student spends an excessive amount of time online, to the detriment of that student's education, wellbeing and health
- Risky sexual behaviour, whereby the student is exposed to predatory influences, posts
- Sexually suggestive material or make connections with others for sexual 'hook-ups'
- Cyber-bullying – involving the sending or posting of harmful and sometimes malicious material online

The responsibility for monitoring a child's use of social media, or indeed the internet in general, must lie with parents/carers. We strongly encourage you to discuss issues around this with your children. If your child is the victim of inappropriate use then we strongly recommend that you as a parent/carer report the matter to both the website developer and to the police. As stated earlier, unless an issue manifests itself during the school day, it is difficult to address from a school point of view.

However, to support you and your child the school will:

- Continue, through PSHE and assemblies, to educate students of the dangers of inappropriate use of the internet
- Continue to monitor the use of any form of ICT in normal school hours and the use of the school email system at all times, and will deal with anything deemed inappropriate

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- Refer anything that we believe could be defined as, or could potentially lead to, a Child Protection issue to the appropriate external agencies
- Continue to support parents with advice on how to tackle inappropriate use either by their own child or others

There are a number of helpful resources that you may find useful:

- The Vodafone digital parenting magazine is an excellent resource for parents on all aspects of e- safety, <http://www.vodafone.com/content/parents.html>
- Check the CEOP resources at <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>
- The Southwest Grid for Learning have developed a resource for young people: 'So you got naked online: <http://swgfl.org.uk/products-services/esafety/resources/So-You-Got-Naked-Online>, which supports them in knowing what to do if things have gone wrong online
- Another useful site is <http://www.internetmatters.org/issues/sexting>

I hope that you find this letter and website links useful and by working together, as outlined in this letter, I trust that we can keep all our students safe and well. I want to emphasise that, we will continue to take a very robust line on those who misuse social media by, for instance, sending an inappropriate image, caption or comment to another student or anyone who victimises and humiliates another using social media.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D. Graham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Mr David Graham
Headteacher