



ST GEORGE'S ACADEMY

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Limited by guarantee

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Dear Parent/Carer

Use of Social Media & Online Safety Awareness Week

As an Academy, we are often approached about issues that have arisen between students on social media. You will be aware that students are not permitted to have their mobile phones out during the school day. We appreciate you may wish for your child to carry a phone for use in an emergency during the journey to and from school, especially given our rural setting, but they are not to be used during the school day. Our policy is that mobile phones should never be used, seen or heard and we will be writing in more detail about our policy in the near future given the latest guidance issued by the government.

Inappropriate use of social media is one of the main reasons for the newly issued guidance. As you will already be aware, your child's use of social media is part of your parental responsibility. We do understand that some children can be very sensitive about parental supervision of their mobile phone use, but it is part of parenting albeit not a straightforward aspect.

This week is Online Safety Awareness Week. As part of this, we educate the students about the dangers and safe use of social media, but the monitoring of their usage is something that must be done at home. Many social media applications and websites have age restrictions, and this is due in part because children are not always mature enough to think through the implications of things they might post. It is important to note that the age-rating for Tik Tok, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat are all 13+, which means that Year 7 and half of Year 8 are not considered old enough to have an account on any of these apps.

In terms of monitoring your child's use of social media, some useful things to consider are as follows:

1. Be a 'friend' on your child's social media
2. Restrict your child's access to data so that they are only able to use their phone for calls and texts unless they are on your broadband at home. This would be especially welcomed by the Academy during the school day
3. Explore the increasing number of parental controls being put into place by network providers
4. Have open discussions about your child's social media usage
5. Share your own good practice
6. Talk about things that appear in the media where social media usage has made a situation worse – there are plenty of adults using it inappropriately
7. Talk about when someone has used social media for good causes and how it can be a really positive tool
8. Talk about how future employers will research social media footprints
9. Charge mobile phones downstairs at night so that you know your child is not distracted by late night posts
10. Monitor how long users spend on their various apps – possibly a whole family activity and then compare and discuss



And three important safeguarding points:

1. Watch carefully for changes in mood and increased secrecy
2. Monitor whether they are 'talking to' any strangers
3. Be mindful of online gaming and your child adding unknown 'friends'

Please find attached an 'Online Safety Newsletter'. This is something we will now be sending each month to help you keep up to speed with the ever-changing technological landscape. As we have said, we appreciate this is not an easy part of parenting, but it is an important aspect. The key is to try and ensure an open approach with your child so that they do not become secretive. We will inform you of any issues that are brought to our attention, so that you are able to address them accordingly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. King". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'L' and 'K'.

Mrs L King
Principal