

ST PAUL'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

A Voluntary Academy



23 May 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

Use of Social Media

We are currently talking to a number of our students about the importance of responsible use of social media, and the detrimental effect it can have when misused. We completely understand how difficult it can be as parents to regularly monitor children's use of their mobile phones and other devices, given their importance to young people for communication. The internet and specifically social media platforms can be hugely beneficial in this area, especially over the last two years where young people have spent so much time away from their friends. However, we are becoming increasingly concerned about the number of students using it in a negative way, and as stated above, the impact that this can have on relationships in school. This term myself and pastoral staff have had to investigate a range of issues that fall into this category.

Social Media Group Chats

Social Media platforms can be extremely beneficial to communicate about school life, e.g. discussions about homework and, revision but recently we have found numerous examples of chats that have been used to make unkind, aggressive, and inappropriate comments about other students that have then spilled over into incidents in school.

Taking and sharing of images

A number of incidents have been reported to us of photographs being taken of other students and then shared on social media, accompanied again with unkind, sometimes inappropriate comments. As with the above, this has spilled over into school and caused further problems

Use of Tik Tok

We also have concerns over students who have fallen out or argued with other students and taken to this particular platform to give their point of view, more often than not in an unhelpful manner. Again, these incidents have had a detrimental effect on the smooth running of school life.

What can we do to address this?

The issues of responsible use of social media is something we regularly raise with our students in form time, PHSE, assemblies and one to one conversations. Our main message revolves around the fact that in many cases comments or the liking of certain comments made in the heat of the moment cannot be deleted and will ultimately reflect badly on those individuals. Although these incidents happen outside of school, we are obliged deal with them in line with our behaviour policy if they impact on school life. Please be aware that incidents that significantly impact on school life will quite rightly be dealt with serious sanctions.

We would be very grateful if you could re-iterate this message to your children, and regularly speak to them about, and monitor, their online activity. Equally if you have any concerns about the information above, please do contact us at school without delay.

We will continue to inform and educate our students about this, however having your support will be vital in minimising these incidents in the future.

Specific Advice on Online Sexual Harassment

Very recently Dame Rachael De Souza, Children's Commissioner for England concluded research she had been conducting with teenagers about Online Sexual Harassment. The result was the publication of a guide entitled **'The things I wish my Parents had known'**.

The issues raised in the publication are hugely important and extremely relevant to young people today. A link to the publication which includes advice and signposts further support, can be found below:

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2021/12/16/the-things-i-wish-my-parents-had-known-young-peoples-advice-on-talking-to-your-child-about-online-sexual-harassment/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20things%20I%20wish%20my,to%20inappropriate%20content%2C%20including%20pornography.>

A copy of the publication will also be on our school website.

Once more if you would like to discuss anything related to the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Curran

Mr A Curran
Vice Principal & Lead DSL