
Be happy, Be ambitious, Make a difference

Ref: ljm/AMG/Correspondence

18 January 2019

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Social Media

You will, as parents/carers, be aware of the phenomena that is social media and the difficulties young people in particular have in managing this. On a daily basis, we are dealing with astonishingly high number of incidents involving the misuse of social media by year 8 students.

Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook and Snapchat all have a legal age of 13 so most students in year 8 should not legally be allowed to use these platforms.

Recent studies have shown an enormous surge in mental health issues and admissions to hospital with self-harm in the 10-14 age group, which ties in directly with the advent of social media.

At least 50% of the issues that we currently deal with in College with year 8 are as a direct result of communications that have happened over social media. This includes the creation of anonymous groups to bully others, sharing of inappropriate images, making threats to other students, and young people actively promoting self-harm. Most students below the age of 14 are simply not equipped mentally to deal with the pressures that this puts on them and this often spills over into the college taking the focus away from their learning. Students are still not grasping the fact that once they add images or text to any of the platforms these do not disappear and are often a source of embarrassment or harassment in the future.

If your child has a mobile phone, access to the internet and/or a computer - lap-top, iPad, Notepad - they are at risk. Our young people are communicating with people they do not know, venting their anger and upset in chat rooms which include a range of 'listeners' / 'observers'. They are sharing images of themselves, family and friends, which are then being altered and reposted.

We strongly recommend that you do not allow your child to take their devices anywhere out of your supervision at home. All school devices are managed securely in school.

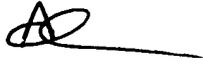
The college also recommends that you take action collectively as parents by not allowing your son/daughter to access any of these platforms before they reach Year 10. If they are online any younger than this, they are not mentally equipped to cope with the issues that may arise, this is based on recent educational research.

If we adopt this approach collectively, it will reduce the peer pressure on students to use these applications. As a College, we cannot continue to deal with this scale of social media incidents

and we must all take a stand to protect the emotional and mental health and well-being of our young people.

Please ensure you discuss and act upon this letter as we work in partnership to keep our students happy, safe and ambitious.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Anne Gregory', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Anne Gregory
Head Teacher