



Saint Joseph's

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

22 September 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians

Over the past few months the school has had to respond to a number of issues regarding social networking which have occurred ***outside of the school day and often in school holidays***. We see the frequency of these issues increasing and as a result we are concerned, not only for the educational implication, but also for the emotional and social well-being of our pupils.

The Senior Leadership team and pastoral staff are currently spending a significant amount of their time dealing with issues on 'Facebook', texting of photographs, pictures and comments made on social media sites. The majority of young people in our society have their own social media presence as well as their own phones with texting capabilities. The impact of this technology, even though is outside of school hours, is being felt 24 – 7.

Our school is committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the Internet and as such I feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern.

Possible risks for children under the age of 13 using 'Facebook' and other sites include:

- 'Facebook' and other sites use "age targeted" advertising and therefore your child could be exposed to adverts of a sexual or other inappropriate nature, depending on the age they stated they were when they registered;
- Children may accept friend requests from people they don't know in real life which could increase the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour and in serious cases 'grooming';
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared is not moderated, and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children;
- Photographs shared by users are not moderated and therefore children could be exposed to inappropriate images or even post their own;
- Underage users might be less likely to keep their identity private and lying about their age can expose them to further risks regarding privacy settings and options;
- 'Facebook' and other sites could be exploited by bullies and for inappropriate contact;
- Social media sites cannot and do not verify its members therefore it is important to remember that if your child can lie about who they are online, so can anyone else.

Pointing out these risks of such sites enables you as the parents to make an informed decision as to whether to allow your child to have a profile or not. We will however take action (such as reporting under aged profiles) if a problem comes to our attention from any social media site that involves the safety or well-being of any of our pupils. We will also inform you as the parents if your child has been involved in activities which, we feel, puts any pupils at risk. We will however pass on any serious concerns to the appropriate authorities.

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Within school to support all of our pupils, and you as their parents, we are planning a PSHE series of lessons with all year groups on Internet Safety. Our local Police and PCSO will be working with us to ensure all pupils are aware of the dangers. There is also a newly created e-safety page on our school website. This is designed to advise parents and guardians in safeguarding their children. This can be found at: http://www.sjcs.org.uk/?page_id=4108

We cannot control this problem as it is occurring outside of school, but your help in monitoring will go a long way in assisting us to keep our focus during school hours on educating your children.

In closing, I would like to thank you for reading this letter and for recognising our deep and genuine concern for your children and our pupils. We urge you to take the necessary steps we have outlined above so that we can all, parents and educators alike, continue to provide our pupils with the excellent education and pastoral care that makes St Josephs' Catholic School the outstanding community that it is today.

Yours sincerely

Mrs RA Ridley
Head teacher