April 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

“If you would not like to receive it, do not send it”

I am writing to explain our ‘Joint Police Policy’ regarding online and mobile technologies. As you will be aware, there continues to be a significant growth in electronic forms of communication – Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Houseparty and WhatsApp to name a few.

Along with the growth in the use of these types of communication, there has also been a marked increase in the number of criminal offences committed by people who misuse electronic communications. Offences linked to technology can be committed under the Telecommunications Act, Malicious Communications Act, the Protection of Children Act or the Criminal Justice Act. Therefore, I like to take this opportunity to outline to you the approach the school takes on social media and the consequences for any student that breaches our policy.

In order to be eligible to sign up for Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Houseparty and Facebook you must be at least 13 years old. The school will not support the use of these or similar sites for students under 13 years old. There have been occasions when social medial sites have been misused to commit acts of bullying and harassment towards other students – any such behaviour brought to the attention of the school will be addressed and may be referred to the police.

Chats, conversations and other messages that you believe to be private can be hacked into, screen printed and shared with other users, or forwarded to people outside of friendship groups. This in turn can cause other offences to be committed. Students should *never* send pictures of themselves that could be

considered ‘indecent’ as these images, once sent, cannot be retrieved.

The consequences of misusing social media may lead to school exclusion or a criminal record which has far reaching implications.

Like you, we want to ensure our school is a safe learning environment for all of our students. The safeguarding of our pupils will always be of paramount importance to all of the staff. We therefore urge you to read and discuss the contents of this letter with your child to ensure they fully understand the implications of it and can keep themselves safe from inadvertently committing criminal acts or becoming victims themselves.

We also encourage you to monitor your child’s online activity and to check their privacy settings on a regular basis. There are many ways to take a positive and proactive approach to this; the Internet Matters website provides guidance on online use monitoring apps: <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/monitoring-apps-parents-guide/>

Please note, if your child uses the TikTok app, there is a facility for ‘Family Pairing’. This links the parent’s TikTok account to their child’s account. Once enabled, the parent can control ‘Digital Wellbeing’ features, including: Screen Time Management, Direct Messages and Restricted Mode. More information about this can be found here: [https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/parents-ultimate-guide-to-](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/parents-ultimate-guide-to-tiktok#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DTikTok%20requires%20that%20users%20be%2Cplenty%20of%20young%20tween%20users) [tiktok#:~:text=TikTok%20requires%20that%20users%20be,plenty%20of%20young%20tween%20users](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/parents-ultimate-guide-to-tiktok#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DTikTok%20requires%20that%20users%20be%2Cplenty%20of%20young%20tween%20users)

Also, remember that there is help and advice available:

**The Internet Watch Foundation** (<https://www.iwf.org.uk/>) work internationally to make the internet a safer place. They search for inappropriate images and videos of children and offer a place for the public to report them anonymously before removing them.

**CEOP – Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (**<https://ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>) is tasked to work both nationally and internationally to bring online [child sex offenders,](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_sexual_abuse) including those involved in the production, distribution and viewing of [child abuse material](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_pornography), to the UK courts.

**Childline -** Call 0800 1111 or visit [https://www.childline.org.uk/.](https://www.childline.org.uk/)

**EST E-Safety Training** - <https://www.esafetytraining.org/parent-carers-area>.

**Internet Matters** - <https://www.internetmatters.org/>

**Net-aware** - <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

Yours faithfully,