

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing to you to outline the academy's concerns on the misuse of social media. We find ourselves in a number of challenging and avoidable situations due to students' inappropriate use of social media. We know from our discussions with other head teachers and senior colleagues in local schools that this is not just an Erdington academy concern

Recently, we have been made aware of incidences of the misuse of social media by students. It is highly likely that the recent surge in social media issues is linked to the recent lockdown. I wanted to assure you that if any aspect of ICT is misused in the Academy on our equipment, or if there is any misuse of the Academy email system either in or out of normal academy hours, then, due to the sophisticated filters in operation, we can identify and address this misuse.

However, it seems, most of the inappropriate use of the internet is done from home or on students' mobile devices during evenings, weekends and holidays. If your child is the victim of inappropriate use then we strongly recommend that you as a parent/carer report the matter to both the website developer and to the police. As stated earlier, unless an issue manifests itself during the normal academy day, our staff are not able to address this. Staff can only address issues that impact the academy, any social media misuse taken place by students will be reported to the police and student information will be provided should the police need to investigate the issue further.

It should be noted that in many cases a child may put themselves at considerable risk due to the misuse of social media accidentally. E.g. giving personal details, publishing photographs, etc. to a 'friend' who then distributes this information more widely. Students need to be fully aware of this risk. The responsibility for monitoring a child's use of social media, or indeed the internet in general, must lie with parents/guardians. We strongly encourage you to discuss issues around this with your children and monitor and limit their screen time when at home. We recommend that any student under the age of 16 does not have any form of social media that parents do not know the usernames and passwords, this will then enable parents to periodically monitor and report issues. You can find a document containing advice intended to support you in this process on our website. In addition, we have also put links to other websites containing further advice around children's use of ICT on our Academy website.

To support you and your child the Academy will:

- Continue, through PSHE and assemblies, to educate students of the dangers of inappropriate use of the internet
- Continue to monitor the use of any form of ICT in normal academy hours and the use of the Academy email system at all times, and will deal with anything deemed inappropriate
- Refer anything that we believe could be defined as, or could potentially lead to, a Child Protection issue to the appropriate external agencies
- Continue to support parents with advice on how to tackle inappropriate use either by their own child or others

We appreciate how widespread the use of mobile devices is and how much of a part of everyday life they have become. We accept that social networking can be a useful communication tool, however like form of communication it can be abused. We ask you to support us by considering the points made in this letter and take any appropriate action. Our priorities are your children's education and wellbeing, by working together, as outlined in this letter, I trust that we can keep all our students safe and well.

Thank you for your continued support

Yours sincerely