

17th November 2020

HEAD OF SCHOOL: Mr I Bacon

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: Social Media and keeping your children safe; E-safety – key information for parents

It has been brought to our attention that some of our children have Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and other social media profiles even though the permitted minimum age to use these sites is **13 years old**, according to their terms and conditions. We have also been made aware of some inappropriate chat on WhatsApp groups, for which a person needs to be **16 years old** before they open an account.

At Watling Academy, we are committed to keeping our children safe and to promoting the safe, responsible use of the Internet. As such, we feel it is our responsibility to raise this particular issue as a concern.

To support students with internet safety we will:

- Deliver focused internet safety sessions during timetabled well-being lessons. These will start this Friday.
- Hold an assembly this week to educate students of the dangers of inappropriate use of the internet including social media.
- Have focused tutor-based activities that support students staying safe online.
- Monitor the use of any form of ICT during academy hours including the use of the Academy email system at all times, and will deal with anything deemed inappropriate
- Support parents with advice on how to tackle inappropriate use either by their own child or others.

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. They need to be fully aware of this risk.

As you are aware, we have a 'no mobile phone or devices' rule at Watling Academy. If students do bring their phones or devices into school, they must stay, switched off, in their lockers or bags at all times. Phones and devices will be confiscated if they are out during the school day. It is also important that I make it clear to all parents and students that should a student take a video or photos during the academy day, and/or post any such photos or videos on any social media they will put themselves at risk of exclusion from school.

Respect / Responsibility / Kindness

Much of the social media use is accessed on students mobile devices during evenings, weekends and holidays, and whilst Watling staff do not have the capacity to investigate all instances of misuse, we will endeavour to educate all of our students with about safe use of the internet and social media.

We are extremely fortunate at Watling to have parents willing to work with us in monitoring their children's use of social media and in educating them to stay safe, including discussing issues associated with appropriate use of such sites. Below is a link to the governments guide for parents to support their children using social media.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers/child-safety-online-a-practical-guide-for-parents-and-carers-whose-children-are-using-social-media>

If your child is the victim of inappropriate use of social media sites, or cyber-bullying, then we strongly recommend that you report the matter both to the website developers and to the police. Of course, we will support all students at the academy in dealing with any such incidents alongside this.

Please use the link on our website for more information and reporting procedure for any bullying <https://watlingacademy.net/2020/10/06/abcwatling-academy/> (link also available on the front page of our website).

If you feel that you would like support with any aspect of this letter, or you have any questions, then please do not hesitate to contact me,

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Barford', written in a cursive style.

Jo Barford
Deputy Head