



January 2019

Dear Parents / Carers,

SOCIAL MEDIA, INTERNET USE, SAFETY AND SHARING OF MATERIALS

I am writing to you because of our ever increasing concerns regarding the misuse of social media and networking amongst some of our students.

Many of our students in the lower school are using social media website and apps, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, that have an age restriction of 13 years old. If your daughter is under 13 and has one of these accounts she is in direct violation of their terms and conditions and this account, and any others she may have fraudulently signed up for, must be deleted.

As a school, we expect that our girls interact with each other appropriately and with respect, both inside and outside of school hours. We do take reports of internet misuse seriously and investigate them. We will take action if our students are found to have used social media sites to bully other girls, to contact or make comments about members of staff, or to bring the school into disrepute in some other way. Above all, our aims are to prevent misuse and put a stop to online bullying.

There are various sites and apps that wrongly promise anonymity, that display images, messages and videos to appear for short periods of time and then claim they 'disappear' and that gives unfettered access to unknown users across the world. Such sites are increasingly being used as a means to communicate abusive, bullying and sexualised content. These sites, that allow anonymity or content that appears to disappear, reduce the users inhibitions; children and young people who would not be cruel face-to-face, and who do not see the consequences of their actions, may feel justified saying hurtful things online. Equally, children who would not appear likely to indulge in sexual behaviour in "real life" can get themselves into inappropriate or risky situations online.

We would like you to be aware of the following guidelines and take action, where necessary:

- Seriously consider telling your daughter that she is not allowed to use certain social networking sites.
- Whether you allow your daughter to use certain sites or not, have regular conversations with her about appropriate use, including how the anonymous or instantaneous nature of online communication can change the way people behave.



'Shaping Tomorrow, Inspired by Faith'

- If you choose to allow your daughter to use these websites and apps ensure, where possible, your daughter adjusts privacy settings so that posts on social networking sites are only seen by those she chooses.
- Please supervise your daughter's activities online, especially on social networking sites.
- If your daughter experiences or witnesses online bullying, tell her not to respond. The best option is to take a print out or screen shot of the offending post and then delete the "app" and the account.
- Please report incidents of online bullying to us or encourage your daughter to do so. Reports can be made to the Head of Year.
- Further advice on what to do in case of abuse can be found here:
<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

Any girl from this school who is found to have posted offensive or abusive comments online will be dealt with seriously.

For more information about various social networking sites and other online activity, parents are advised to consult the following guides:

www.ourladys.hackney.sch.uk/socialmedia

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre>

<https://www.childnet.com/young-people>

Many thanks for your continued support and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Justine McDonald

Headteacher

