

8<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Dear parents and carers,

## Re: use of social media

At Uplands, we are spending increasing amounts of time resolving conflicts created outside of school on social media. These issues range from unkind comments, forwarding photographs of other students without their permission and, in more serious cases, online bullying.

I would be very grateful if you could re-read our ICT and social media policy, which can be found here <http://www.uplandsccl.com/safeguarding>, and talk to your son/daughter about responsible use of these sites.

Some reminders that you might find helpful:

- Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat have a minimum age for use of 13. **If your child is 11 or 12, they should not have any of these social media accounts.** There are many games and apps that also have a minimum age requirement. You can check any game or app here <http://www.pegi.info/en/index/>. These guidelines are in place to protect young people. I should be very grateful for your support in adhering to these guidelines;
- Even if your son/daughter is 13 or older, they should remember that other people can see what they post and they should use prudence and caution when using these sites;
- Remind your child that their phone/tablet belongs to you and check it sporadically;
- Do not let your child use their device on their own in their bedrooms;
- Have a phone/tablet curfew in the evenings;
- Keep all chargers for electronic devices away from your children's bedroom;
- Have regular digital-free time.

You may find the CEOP website useful: <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

We are living in a fast-changing digital landscape and it is therefore important we adapt to this accordingly. Social media is not going to go away any time soon, so it is extremely important we work in partnership to ensure our young people use it appropriately and responsibly.

As a parent myself, I find the safeguarding of my children from issues online a particular worry. As parents, we still see the 'internet' as something that is accessed via a home computer and we forget that with 4G networks our children can access anything from their phones at any time.

The 'group chats' on Instagram and Snapchat are a great worry. Students can get themselves into very upsetting conversations when an initial remark may have been written in jest. As a school, it is virtually impossible for us to investigate or find the root of an issue when students are using these apps or websites. We advise students not to react to a comment online and



just report it to us or their parents. Reacting to it just creates a circle of horrible comments with very little way of us being able to unpick the issues that then arise. We are often shown the last message that shows the other person in the worst possible light, so please ask to see the whole conversation before contacting the College.

Unless we speak to our children and check what they are doing, we can never be sure what dangers they are putting themselves in.

I am grateful for your support in this matter.

Kind regards

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Headteacher



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