

Dear Parent/Guardian

As many families are aware, the pastoral teams at Budmouth regularly deal with concerns about the impact of social media on our students. We know from our discussions with other headteachers and senior colleagues, primary and secondary, that this is a nationwide issue and you may also have seen many cases reported in the media.

Although the use of mobile phones is strictly monitored in school, we are often made aware, by both students and parents, of the misuse of social media at home, sometimes by our students and on other occasions, where our students have been the victims of misuse. These online arguments have then manifested themselves in school with arguments, name calling and other incidents. Despite sanctions, parental meetings and reinforced messages about how to behave, we still see students continuing to misuse messaging and social media and failing to recognise their own role in this.

It should be noted that in many cases a child can accidentally put themselves at considerable risk due to the misuse of social media. For example, they may give out personal details or publish photographs, etc. to a 'friend', who then distributes this information more widely. Students need to be fully aware of the dangers of these actions and the risks involved.

As issues with social media have been more prevalent with our female students, we have arranged a workshop for all Year 8 girls with the Dorset Police 'Safer Schools' Team. This will give us the opportunity to explain the implications of the misuse of social media and to encourage them to really consider how they interact with one another online. The girls will be split into 3 groups and meet with Stuart Hann from 'Safer Schools' on Wednesday 14th July 2021 during the school day.

Parents have a vital role in monitoring online behaviour and supporting children through any issues to do with social media. Whether they are using Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter or Whatsapp, it is important that you speak to your child about the risks online, especially about them thinking before posting messages or chatting to someone online in anger, or on impulse. These messages (which could include inappropriate pictures and videos) are almost impossible to take back. Whilst many of the posts are completely harmless, there are occasions where young people are posting inappropriate and sometimes even indecent images of themselves. This is putting them at risk, so it's also important that you speak to them to understand why they have done this, so that we, in turn, can direct them to any help they may need.

We strongly encourage you to discuss issues around this with your child and I have placed a link to a website intended to support you in this process.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

We believe that the Safer Schools event on Wednesday July 14th will be helpful, informative and supportive for the Year 8 girls.

Please contact me if there are any queries on lcarter@budmouth-aspirations.org

Yours sincerely



Ms L Carter
Head of School