



ST MARGARET WARD CATHOLIC ACADEMY



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Principal: Mr. D. McKenna B.Soc.Sc. MA. PGCE. NPQH.

04A/SocialMedia/PJ/LB

20th November 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to you to clarify elements of the school's policy on the misuse of social media. As you may be aware, there have been several incidences of the misuse of social media. Sometimes this has been instigated by our students, and other times where our students have been the victims of misuse. Within school time the clear expectation is that student mobile phones / tablets etc. are switched off. Where a student is seen using their mobile phone or tablet for any reason the device is switched off, confiscated from them and handed back to them at the end of the school working day.

If any aspect of ICT is misused across the school is on our equipment we will identify and address this misuse. Fortunately, this type of misuse is incredibly rare and this is helped by the fact that students are not able to access any social media sites across our network.

Indeed, most of the inappropriate use of the internet and in particular social media in its many guises, is done from home, on the way to and from school, or on students' mobile devices during evenings, weekends and holidays. Staff at the school have no jurisdiction to deal with this and cannot investigate it. The responsibility for monitoring a young person's use of social media, or indeed the internet in general, must lie with parents/carers. We strongly encourage you to discuss issues around this with your children. It is also worth noting that the age limit for Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok is 13 years unless the account has parental control settings. For WhatsApp, with effect from May 2018, it is 16 years of age.

If your child is the victim of inappropriate use then we strongly recommend that you as a parent/guardian take the following actions:

- a) Block the person sending the abusive messages.
- b) Report the matter to both the social media provider and to the Police.

As stated earlier, unless an issue manifests itself during the normal school day and thus interferes with the learning of students in school, our staff are not able to address this.

However, to support you and your child the School will:

- Continue, through Touching Hearts lessons, form time 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 school hours and the use of the school 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 children.

I hope that you find this information useful and by working together, as outlined in this letter, I trust that we can keep all our students safe and well.

Yours faithfully

Mr P Johnson
Vice Principal

If you require this information in a different format, please contact the school.

