



**COX
GREEN
SCHOOL**

Highfield Lane, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3AX
Tel: 01628 629415
Email: enquiries@coxgreen.com
Website: <http://www.coxgreen.com>

09 May 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Cox Green School prides itself on providing a safe learning environment for its students. An emerging national concern is the inappropriate use of social media platforms by students. This problem has the potential to be harmful, and we ask your support in assisting us with this challenge. While some social media sites and apps provide limitless sources of information and engaging educational tools, others are providing ways for students to spread and share inappropriate pictures and comments.

Across the country, schools have seen an increase in negative student behavior as a result of messages written using electronic technology, posted to popular social networking sites such as Instagram, SnapChat, WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook. Over recent weeks, Cox Green School's students have been negatively impacted by student activity on social media platforms. We need your help.

Many social media platforms allow students to post statements that ordinarily would not be said in a face-to-face conversation. Consequently, some students use the sites to participate in online bullying or to threaten harm to other students. Cyber bullies use the anonymity of the Web to hurt others without witnessing the consequences.

While your own family values will tell you what is acceptable online activity for your children, I encourage you to talk to your children about social media safety and privacy. Some of these sites give students a false sense of security about the privacy of what they are posting. Parents should be aware of what their children are writing on the Internet and what others are posting in reply. These Web sites are public domain, and anything posted there can be seen by anyone who has Internet access. Although most of what is written is not immoral, offensive, or illegal, some of it is. A reminder too, that social media sites set their lower age limits at 13 for good reasons – young people have to be taught how to communicate with each other appropriately and respectfully online.

Ideally, we are asking you, as typically the bill payer and therefore someone who is unknowingly financing this activity, to help stop it. Your son/ daughter should share the pin they have for their phone with you. At intervals, please ask them to go through the content of the various apps they use e.g. Snapchat, Instagram, messages, Viber etc. If inappropriate content is found, please confiscate the phone and make us aware of any issues. Please go through their contact list and ask them who each contact is and get them to delete those contacts they have only known online.

A significant amount of communication happens whilst students are playing on their games consoles and when messaging through games as they are linked to the internet. We would ask you to monitor this also, particularly if your child spends a lot of time in their own bedroom on their console.

Lastly, copies of e-communications, Snapchat etc. are held by the mobile phone carriers and can be made available to the police on request.

As a school we have seen comments and pictures posted online that may negatively impact our student's ability to secure employment or enter into college. We have had students crying because of the cruel comments posted on these sites by their peers. Regrettably we must inform you that we have even had students seek out our help because they are experiencing suicidal thoughts due to social media comments and bullying.



Social media does not stop at home. It carries over into the school day. Students are mimicking the behaviour they exhibit online in their daily communications with each other in school. Sadly we are seeing and hearing students treating each other with a lack of respect in the same manner with which they communicate online.

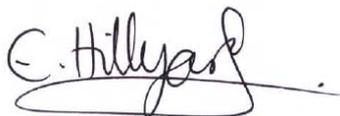
Students, maybe your son/ daughter, are being mentally and verbally abused by irresponsible and disrespectful students. Some students do not feel safe from the attacks made on social media sites and are fearful of what may be said about them. We will not infringe on a student's freedom of speech, however, we will hold students accountable for the inappropriate use of technology while on school grounds. We will also report to the police any posts that we perceive to be threatening to the well-being of any student and adult. We are asking that students come forward to report others that are using these sites for destructive purposes aimed at harming others.

We encourage you to establish rules and guidelines to ensure the safety of your child while on the Internet. Some Web sites offer parental or family guidance for Internet safety as well as information about all the latest apps; for example, NSPCC located online at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Lastly, we would add that online activity is seriously depriving some of our students of sleep as they take their electronic devices to their rooms and a number of apps, e.g. snapchat, reward users to be the last one to reply in a conversation thread. We would suggest good practice from our training, is that mobile devices are turned "off" and left in the kitchen.

Thank you for your support and cooperation in keeping our students safe. If you have questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact your student's Form Tutor, SAFE Manager or Personal Development and Behaviour Lead.

Yours sincerely,



Ed Hillyard

Deputy Head

