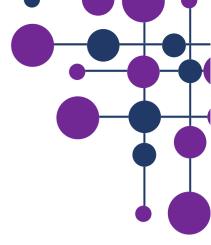26th April 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

<u>Inappropriate use of social media</u>

At Royds Hall, we pride ourselves on our robust Personal Development curriculum that is driven through the contextual safeguarding concerns we gather about each year group. From this we provide a range of education on social media use and healthy relationships. Last week, Year 7 received an assembly to further educate them on staying safe online and appropriate use of online platforms.

Unfortunately, I must write to inform you that we are currently experiencing an increase in the number of incidents involving inappropriate use and offensive comments on social media, made by Year 7 students. When an incident is reported, we investigate fully. This involves speaking to all students, collecting written statements, securing evidence of screenshots, logging each incident on the school's systems, uploading the evidence obtained, contacting parents, issuing an appropriate sanction, completing a restorative meeting to reduce any repeat offence occurring, and then finally, provide an educational intervention following the incident. In some cases, we report incidents to the police, depending on the nature and severity of an incident.

Part of the education that we provide is to develop students understanding of what it means to live in a digital age and the impact of what they post now, can have on their future. We have taken the necessary steps to ban the use of mobile phones within school, to help reduce incidents online, however, we are experiencing an increase in the number of incidents that occur outside of school. Incidents out in the community, away from school, are often brought into school, which means that staff are spending a considerable amount of time investigating incidents that stem from social media platforms. The increase in incidents is primarily coming from Year 7 students, many who are too young to have accounts on the actual social media platforms where reported incidents are coming from.

For those who may not be aware, there is a legal age limit for social media platforms and this information is provided below.

Age restrictions for social media use in the UK are as follows:
- **WhatsApp: 16 years old**
- **Facebook: 13 years old**
- **Snapchat: 13 years old**
- **Twitter: 13 years old**
- **Instagram: 13 years old**

It would appear that Snapchat is the platform where most of our issues come from. Recently, we are experiencing incidents where students are reporting to us that 'random people are adding them' and engaging in inappropriate conversations, asking for inappropriate images and the creating of false accounts to engage in conversation and/or initiate conflict. As a school we are very concerned about this, as students are placing themselves at potential risk.

We write to ask you to monitor the social media platforms that your child is accessing and reiterate the education we are providing as a school. There are legal age restrictions in place for a reason. As a school, we take the safeguarding of all students as the school's main priority. However, we need all parents to work with us and ensure that their child/children are not accessing platforms that they are legally not allowed to access.

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I have listed some useful websites for parents to look at on ways that they can improve the online safety of their child below. I have also suggested parental apps that can be downloaded to help parents manage their child's/children's usage. We cover this heavily within the school's Personal Development curriculum and we regularly address this in assemblies. I am also aware that there are many parents who already take an active role in managing their child's/children's use of social media, and I would like to thank those parents who do so.

Useful websites:

National Online Safety. Please use this link https://nationalcollege.com/enrol/royds-hall-community-school to create a free account where you can access lots of information, videos and advice on how to keep your child safe online.
Use parental controls on your child's iPhone and iPad - Apple Support
The Best Free Parental Control Apps for 2024 (pcmag.com)
How to set an example and be a digital role model for your children (vodafone.co.uk)
Keeping children safe online - Parent's questions answered | Barnardo's (barnardos.org.uk)

Useful apps:
Parental controls & privacy settings guides | Internet Matters
This article contains guides to setting up parental controls and privacy settings, including Android, iPhone and Google family links.

We are here to support all students and families and we will continue to do so; however, we do need all parental support to help to manage this effectively.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact school.

Kind regards,

D Hall

Mr D Hall
Assistant Headteacher