

Our Ref: Safeguarding/LFo

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

Dear Parent/ Guardian

**Re: Social Media / Mobile Phones**

Following on from our letter 25<sup>th</sup> January, regarding online safety, we would like to take a few moments of your time to highlight concerns around the use of mobile phones/social media, by students both in and out of school.

As we stated previously, our children live in an age where, pretty much, anything they want to access is available to them online – good or bad, cute or disturbing. Social media, and device technology, is ever changing and at an immense pace – this brings with it a bigger audience, wider choice, greater risks and the need for the user to take responsibility. Responsibility for contacts made, what is viewed and what is shared.

As always, we would highly recommend that parents/carers regularly check their child's activity online and on their phones. This would include:

- Checking group/party-chats
- Check all contacts are known personally
- Check Apps used are age-appropriate and privacy settings are in place
- Check photos stored
- Check messages sent/received
- Check images received/sent

As a school we have recently seen a spate of young children receiving unsolicited images and videos of extreme violence and terrorist acts being carried out. This occurs when children are added to group chats with contacts that they do not know and view the material. We strongly urge parents to discuss online safety with their children in addition to the guidance that we give them in school.

Children may be asked to share either nude or semi-nude images of themselves to peers. Some children may do so through peer-pressure, harassment, threats of repercussions, grooming or simply through trust if in a relationship/friendship.

The moment *any* image is shared, the control of what happens to that image is lost.

The Law states that creating or sharing sexual images or videos of a child under 18 is illegal, even if the person sharing is a child. There are no exceptions!

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**Mr S Strickland - Principal - BA (Hons), MA, NPQH**

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At The Duston School, we treat this misuse of social media (sexting) very seriously. Any child caught sharing indecent images of another child (no matter how they came to possess the image) will have their phone confiscated, pending investigation. Parents will be notified and Police may be involved. The child could also face a fixed-term exclusion or potential permanent exclusion.

Please use this link, [NSPCC](#), for further information/advice.

Issues with sharing images does not stop with nudes/semi-nudes. If a child is found to be sharing pornographic/disturbing images the same actions would be put in place.

Our stance on inappropriate messaging/bullying; whether through group-chats or direct messaging, is equally strong. It will not be tolerated. Again, any children involved will have their phones confiscated pending investigation. Consequences would then follow i.e., fixed-term exclusion.

We cannot stress the emotional trauma and harm that can be caused to children by all/any of the above.

If you have any concerns about your child's (or another's) use of social media please don't hesitate to contact us.

Please ensure your children know that they can speak to any member of staff in school if they are concerned about any activity on social media. Anything reported to us will be addressed with the utmost importance and discretion.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'TW', written in a cursive style.

Mr T Wise  
**Vice Principal – Head of KS3**