



16 June 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

### Social Media Fake Accounts

We are always keen to work with you on issues that we see in school and with this in mind, we wanted to make you aware of an issue we have experienced during lockdown and since then, during the remainder of this academic year. We have learned of issues with fake accounts being set up on social media platforms mimicking staff members and other fake accounts spreading racist messages. Whilst we do a lot of work with the students as part of their pastoral programmes on the effects that irresponsible actions such as this can cause, we are keen to engage with you to ensure a joined up approach with regards to this matter, and also having received some additional guidance from the police.

Sometimes, we appreciate children do not understand fully the implications of their actions and we are keen to ensure they have advice from all of the people who are supporting them as they grow up. Key facts we want to ensure everyone is aware of:

1. It is often parents who take out device contracts, and therefore if a social media account/platform is accessed through the affected device, it is the parent who is responsible for the content shared, and who would be liable for any issue with the account.
2. If fake accounts spread racist, sexist, homophobic, extremist messages, etc. then a referral to the police is often made. This type of crime falls under Malicious Communications and is dealt with as a Hate Crime.

In light of this, and in the interest of aiming to safeguard everybody, we advise the following:

1. Ensure your child knows who owns the phone contract and the implication of any issues with phone contracts and social media accounts.
2. Ensure they understand that they are over the age of criminal responsibility (as they are above 10 years old) and can be held accountable for their actions by the police.
3. It is important they do not give in to peer pressure, when it is them who would be held responsible as a result their actions. We stress the importance of their understanding that actions taken now can directly impact their future.
4. Sit down with them and check their social media accounts, get them to show you the photos on their accounts and who they are talking to (do they know all of these people?)

If you are unsure of any social media platforms that your child is using, then please refer to: <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/guides> in the first instance. There are some very good guides about setting up parental controls. If you do have any concerns, then please contact your child's Head of Year or a member of the safeguarding team and they will be very happy to help you.

Yours sincerely

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