



Sir Frederic Osborn School

Achieving Success Together

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Dear Parent /Carer

Recently in a neighbouring secondary school a Year 7 student went missing. Social Media was used by the family and police to alert the wider community and the appeal for help contributed to her safe return. We are pleased to report that this young person was reunited with her family, but, as I am sure you can imagine, it was very traumatic for everyone involved.

It appears that there may have been communication between this student and an older male who did not attend that student's school leading to her meeting him in London.

We fully understand that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the ways that our children and young people are using new and ever changing technologies. Our children are being brought up in a society that has become dependent on computers, smart phones, iPad, online games and virtual communities. We feel that it is important to point out the risks of unregulated use of social media sites and apps so that you can make an informed decision about how you allow your child to use their mobile phone, tablet or computer.

We would like our parents/carers to consider;

- Young people may accept friend requests from people that they don't know in real life which increases the risk of inappropriate contact or behaviour.
- Language, games, groups and content posted or shared on social media is not moderated and therefore can be offensive, illegal or unsuitable for children and young adults.
- Photographs shared by users are not moderated and therefore young people could be exposed to inappropriate images or persuaded to post images of their own which are inappropriate.

Issues such as this are explored and are discussed in an age appropriate manner throughout a student's time at Sir Frederic Osborn School.

Our advice to you as parents would be to urge caution with all social media websites and apps. We strongly recommend that you closely monitor your child's use of technology in their own interest and have a regular dialogue with them about the dangers of the internet and ask them to inform you of anything that they see that is inappropriate.

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We would also strongly advise a 'device free' bedroom policy to allow for uninterrupted sleep and rest. You should have no qualms about completely stopping all access to social media and liaise with the school if you have any concerns.

There are a number of very useful resources for parents to access such as:

- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/>
- <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>
- <https://www.herts.police.uk/advice/halo.aspx>

As a school we are committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the internet and social media with our students and their families. The use of social media by students in all schools across the country remains an ongoing concern but we do hope you find this letter informative and helpful in securing the safety of our young people.

Yours sincerely

S Akers

Ms S Akers
Safeguarding Officer DDSP and Mental Health Lead