

Re: Responsible use of social media (8 minutes reading time)

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been a long term and I would like to thank you for how accommodating you have been under very challenging circumstances.

Next week, we hope to share some highlights of some of the really wonderful things that have taken place at school this term! Staff have worked so hard to ensure that our pupils are still having happy, memorable and meaningful learning experiences, despite all the local and national restrictions.

I am writing, however, to share some information about some less positive incidents which we would appreciate your support in combatting.

We have seen a marked rise in a number of inappropriate uses of social media taking place outside of school hours. Heads of Year and the senior leadership team are finding themselves investigating unpleasant exchanges between pupils which have taken place in the evening or over the weekend.

Whilst we are glad to support in helping to identify malicious use of social media applications, I am asking that as parents and carers you also support us with this work.

✔ **How can we help?**

Speak to your child about the terrible impact of cyberbullying. The NSPCC defines cyberbullying as:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- trolling – the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- shaming someone online
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm or consider suicide
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

We do not tolerate bullying of any kind at Leytonstone School and though we are keen to support perpetrators, if we do not see sizeable improvements in their conduct, the consequences for such pupils will be severe.

✔ What else can we do?

If you provide your child with smartphone, discuss together and look through any social media groups they belong to and the content of these groups. If your child is fortunate enough to own a Playstation, ask questions about the nature of the 'chats' taking place and apply limits for how long they use these devices.

Please remember the legal age limits for these most popular social media applications:



16 years of age: WhatsApp have just announced a change to their terms and conditions for users based in Europe. Users will now need to be 16 to use WhatsApp.



13 years of age: Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Musical.ly and Skype.

Whilst there is no age restriction for watching videos on YouTube, users need to be 13 or older to have their own YouTube account (enabling them to subscribe to other channels, like videos, post comments, share their own content and flag inappropriate content).

We understand that various cohorts at the school have independently created their own year group Whatsapp/Snapchat groups. These groups are not supported or endorsed by the school and for any year group outside of Year 11, the existence of some of these groups is prohibited.

In a nutshell, we believe that if we work together and adhere to these sensible guidelines we can keep our young people responsible, happy and in good mental and emotional health.

Please do complete the survey below if you have not already done so. We are keen to provide training for parents and carers in the new year about practical ways they can keep their children safe from the more harmful aspects of online life.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MVDKMMM>

Thank you for your support with this

Yours sincerely,

Jessica McQuaid

Head Teacher