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Responsibility: Director of Studies/Digital Strategy Leads



DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS PUPIL AND PARENT SOCIAL NETWORK GUIDANCE

Online social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok and Instagram are now pervasive in society, including in the lives of many of our pupils. These networks are designed to be extremely attractive to children and young people in order to gain as much of their attention as possible. However, they open up a whole range of social and pastoral issues which schools have to deal with on a frequent basis. In order to do the best we can to keep children safe online, parents and children need to be aware of the following:

1. Whatever is written online remains traceable permanently, and is potentially visible to everyone. Posting certain comments or images on sites such as those mentioned above can quite easily lead to someone committing a criminal offence and the evidence trail is extremely easy to follow.
2. Ultimately, schools have no power to control what a pupil puts on their own computer/mobile device outside school hours. However, schools have a legal duty to investigate the misuse of online social media where it results in bullying or abusive behaviour involving their pupils; this includes the use of such media outside school hours.
3. Police Forces and Children's Social Care teams report that 60% of 13-18 year olds have been asked to send an indecent image of themselves to someone, 40% have created indecent images of themselves and 25% have sent such images of themselves or of others. The creation and distribution of such nude or semi-nude images (also known as youth produced sexual imagery or 'sexting') is a rapidly growing problem for children today.

Pupils and parents need to be aware that it is illegal to store, possess, send, ask for, receive or distribute an indecent image of a young person under 18 years, including images children have taken of themselves, as whilst they may be a victim, they also commit an offence. Such action may result in prosecution. In a number of circumstances schools have a duty to report cases to the police and to Children's Social Services. Whilst the police may take a sensitive and supportive stance in relation to images which are deemed 'experimental' (i.e. between young people in a relationship and not distributed to others) they are more likely to take a firm stance on 'aggravated' cases (i.e. the deliberate distribution of images intended to bully,

demean, threaten or harass). Dame Allan's Schools (the Schools) will take appropriate action to support and educate pupils involved in such incidents and will impose sanctions against pupils involved in aggravated cases. Such cases will be treated seriously and may result in suspension or exclusion. Pupils and parents are referred to the Schools' Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Whole School Behaviour Policy and the Acceptable Use Policy for further details.

4. Most social media sites require the user to be at least 13 years of age. Users who are under 13 years of age break the terms of the site's use. If children give a false age in order to open an account they will be exposed to material deemed to be suitable for that false age. So if a child of 8 claims to be 13, parents need to be aware that once that child actually reaches 13 years of age, they will have access to all 18+ adult material.
5. Pupils are potentially exposed to malign influences which they would not normally encounter other than via these networks. This may include content/individuals linked to radicalisation and extremism.
6. The Schools' IT system blocks access to social network sites from the Schools' hardware. The exception to this is Twitter, as a number of departments have departmental accounts, which are accessed for resources placed there.
7. If pupils do use social networking sites, we suggest the following specific guidance be followed:
 - a. Different social network sites have different age limits for users. Parents should make themselves aware of the limits on sites their children are using. The NSPCC site (<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/>) has information on the majority of social networking sites and we recommend you visit this site to familiarise yourselves with the sites or apps that your children are using.
 - b. Pupils must regularly ensure their privacy settings are at the maximum.
 - c. Pupils must never disclose their full name, age, date of birth, phone number, e-mail address, address, school or any other personal data. They should be aware that they can be identified by those not known to them if they upload photos of themselves or others and they do not have their privacy settings correctly set.
 - d. Location services such as the 'places' setting on Facebook, and on other sites where such a feature exists, should be disabled as viewers of posts may be able to locate your child.
 - e. Pupils setting up groups or message walls must ensure that the content of those pages is not abusive, bullying or offensive to any general reader, even if it is deemed acceptable to the members of the group.
 - f. Content, which refers to the Schools, can have a very damaging effect on the Schools' reputation even if it may appear to be "just banter" or "harmless fun" to the participants. Dame Allan's Schools will always take rigorous action to protect our reputation if such material comes to light, including the possible imposition of disciplinary sanctions on any pupil found to be creating, adding to or viewing such sites.
 - g. Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about how they use social networking sites, to check regularly the type of content their children are exposed to online and to support the Schools in their efforts to keep pupils safe online.

- h. As a 'rule of thumb', the standard of behaviour we expect is that any material accessed or comments made ought to be suitable to be displayed to the public and should not include anything a pupil wouldn't show his/her 5 year old brother/sister or grandparents.
- 8. Parental attention is drawn to the issues mentioned here at the New Parent Information evenings.
- 9. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Whole School Policy on the Acceptable Use of Electronic Devices and Information Technology Systems.