

14th July 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: Use of Mobile Phones and Social Media

As you will be aware, our current school policy regarding mobile phones, states that students may bring these in to school (at their own risk) and are allowed to use them at breaks and lunchtimes. They should be switched off and out of sight during lessons. If a student breaks these rules, the phone can be confiscated and returned either to the student or a parent/guardian at the end of the day, as appropriate. If the behaviour continues, the privilege of bringing a mobile phone into school will be removed for that child. Some schools have implemented a total ban on mobile phones, and whilst that may be easier for us, at NTC, we believe it is important that young people have the opportunity to learn to use them responsibly and, I am pleased to say, the vast majority do.

Unfortunately, in line with a number of schools, we have seen a significant increase of incidents that relate to breaches of E-Safety and online bullying. These have included students taking photos of fellow students and staff, without their permission, and posting such images without consent on sites such as Instagram. Such actions are a total breach of school policy, which is outlined in the *Student Code of Conduct for ICT*. This policy is available, for reference, in your child's journal. All students sign this policy on entry to the school.

I would also like to highlight that such behaviour, as detailed below, is illegal:

- Setting up an online account with the intention to bully, harass or intimidate can be prosecuted under the Malicious Communications Act.
- Setting up an online account in someone else's name would be committing a crime under the Malicious Communications Act and/or the Computer Misuse Act.
- Posting an image of a sexual nature (e.g. a girlfriend or boyfriend who have fallen out with one another) would be committing a crime under the Revenge Porn Act and/or be guilty of a crime under the Sexual Offences Act if the person in the photo/video is under 18 and/or the person receiving it is under 18.

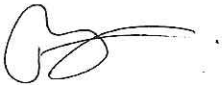
Many social media organisations, such as Facebook and Instagram, have a policy that states; children under 13 years of age are not permitted to hold online accounts. Could I ask that you check the social media activity of your child and take action as appropriate?

In my conversations with other Headteacher's, we acknowledge an increase of incidents such as these and it is taking up a significant amount of staff time, which could be better spent elsewhere. I am sure you will agree, that everyone has a right to privacy and we have a duty as both teachers and as an employer to protect that right. Actions of this nature will not be tolerated. Students involved in such activity will be excluded and, where appropriate, referrals to the police will be made.

We have held assemblies today to remind all students of the school policy and I would be grateful if you reiterate this at home. Students caught taking photos of others in school, without permission, will have their phone confiscated, and it will need to be collected by a parent/guardian. Any student that we feel is involved in such behaviour will be sanctioned. If your child is aware of such online images or has these on his phone, he should speak to someone urgently so that he cannot be accused of being involved in such acts.

Ultimately, this is about keeping all our students and staff safe and their privacy protected. Unless you contact your child's Head of Learning Community, we will assume you are in full agreement of the content of this letter. As always, your support is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J Morgan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr J Morgan
Deputy Headteacher