Dear Parents/Carers,

**The use of Social Media by Parent/Carers and Children**

Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) has had widespread impact on the way in which we communicate and express our thoughts and opinions. There are clearly many benefits for us both as individuals and also as communities, and we continue to explore how we might best harness the power of social media to engage even more closely with parents and children.

Unfortunately we also at times experience a situation where social media has been the vehicle for inappropriate behaviour by both children and parents.

We live in a society where we are proud of our right to freedom of speech and would not wish to suggest that this should be curtailed in any way. There are occasions however, when things said in the virtual world are at best unhelpful and, at worst, may constitute harassment, bullying or intimidation which could ultimately lead to police involvement.

There have been situations where we have had to deal with children using social media to be unkind to others. What starts as something seemingly harmless takes no account of how those on the receiving end might feel nor does it recognise how quickly things can get out of control and become extremely unpleasant.

Whilst things take place off the school site and outside school hours, the resulting ‘fallout’ in such situations can have major implications for relationships within school and a resulting negative impact on teaching and learning.

If you have concerns that your child might be on the receiving end of hurtful social media posts, or playing a part themselves, please talk to us in the first instance, as we will be able to seek additional advice and support as required.

The staff in our schools work tremendously hard to provide the very best education for our students and always want to work in partnership with parents and the wider community. However, we recognise that there will be occasions where, for whatever reason, parents may not agree with a particular course of action or may have specific concerns.

It is entirely natural to discuss school life and express our thoughts and opinions with others face to face or on the phone. Some of these conversations are also aired on social media and the person posting has little control over who might ultimately see it.

Sadly, some of these comments and observations could cause offence if aired in the public domain, and may in some cases be intimidating or even slanderous.

This is not to suggest that we at Wood End Academy are above criticism or do not welcome feedback. However, it is always best when this is constructive and reasonable and is focused on

Vernon Rise, Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 0EQ Tel: 0208 422 6175
Email: admin@woodendacademy.org.uk  Web address: www.woodendacademy.org.uk
finding an acceptable solution. When difficult things need to be said, it is usually best to do so face-to-face, or at least in some form of private communication, such as an e-mail or letter.

Common questions

**If the site I post comments on is ‘private’ then why should I worry what I say, as only my ‘friends’ can read it?**

Once a comment has been posted there is nothing to stop other users forwarding or sharing it. What started as an initial ‘sounding off’ can quickly spread much more widely and cause a lot of unintended hurt.

**How could the Police get involved?**

If postings are considered to be threatening or discriminatory then the police may become involved and have the authority to seize mobile devices and contact service providers.

**How can parents/carers help?**

- If you are posting on social media and it relates to the school, children or other parents, please check your facts, be considerate in the way in which you express things and avoid language that others might consider to be abusive, aggressive or threatening.
- Please do not refer to individual children or staff on social media.
- If you have a significant concern about an aspect of school life, please talk to someone at Wood End Academy before posting on social media.
- If you have a specific complaint, please follow our Complaints Policy which is available on the school website.

We have no wish to stifle debate or discourage parents expressing their views, but want to encourage and promote positive role models in both the digital world as well as the real world. Whilst our children may be the more knowledgeable in using modern communication technologies, it is the partnership of schools and parents that can help them to use it wisely, safely and responsibly.

Yours sincerely,

Mr W Stainbank
Headteacher