15 February 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

**Mobile phones and safety in the local area - working together to keep pupils safe.**

The half term has flown by and thank you for your continued support of school.

**The messages enclosed in this letter reflect the difficult times that we live in; they are important messages for us all.**

The message by chief medical officers last week raising concerns about mobile use, screen time, and harmful content on the internet is welcomed by many in education.

It is timely that on the back of the national news I take this opportunity to convey my concerns about mobile phone usage and the negative impact on our school environment. Over the last few years the increase in incidents that occur in school are almost without exception started from social media exchanges outside of school hours. The time taken to unravel nasty situations by myself, my senior and pastoral leaders is significant.

As long as I have been in education it has always been the role of staff to support pupils when friendships breakdown and pupils fall out, however, the introduction of social media into this mix has multiplied the number of incidents and increased their complexity; some pupils say and do very inappropriate things on line without enough thought of how unsafe they can become and the impact it can have in school. Pupils are connecting across year groups and other schools. One message can have hundreds of views; once said or done on line, messages cannot be taken back.

School focuses heavily on these messages every day, in lessons, form time and GenZ - be careful who you are friends with, think before you press send, are you acting within the law, could you sort this out by talking it through or asking an adult for help. Pupils do feel the pressure of social media, they do get involved and make comments, and they do believe that others will be trustworthy with what they say.

You may or may not know if your child is using these apps.  The purpose of this letter is to ask that you give some thought to the messages in the article last week. What I do know is the reality of just how many incidents we are having to deal with which are completely unrelated to school. I appeal to you all to consider how you can reduce these incidents and help support your child to moderate their use of social media and know when and when not to post things that will create further tensions.

**May I be so bold as to ask you to consider:**

* Encourage phones away from the bedroom as many of the 'chats' happen late at night.
* Look at what kind of things your child talks about on line and searches for on line.
* Ask your child about their connections - do they actually know who they are, have they met them face to face, particularly if they go to other schools.
* If your child uses Snapchat do they understand the implications of Snapmap providing a live interactive map of your child’s location?

P.T.O

Together as adults we all need to model appropriate use of our phones, tablets and computers. We do indeed live in very complicated times and at school we work hard everyday to place the importance on healthy relationships and healthy lifestyles by accessing help from the right people.

**Message from the West Midlands Police:**

We have been informed of a number of recent incidents after school where pupils from other neighbouring schools have been mugged on the High Street and in the park after school and at weekends. May I reiterate the importance of pupils being aware as they walk home, listening to music or texting on the way home is not ideal this makes pupils vulnerable to these crimes. Pupils are safer if after school they go straight home.

I have also attached with this letter an important communication from West Midlands Police regarding ‘County Lines’ Exploitation.

I am sure that you appreciate the importance of the issues and messages in this letter. Keeping pupils safe is my number one priority. Enjoy a restful half term break.

Kind regards,



Mrs H Reeves

*Headteacher*

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| **Important Dates for the Spring Term** |
| **Date** | **Times** | **Event** |
| Wednesday 27th February 2019 | 5pm-7.30pm | Year 9 Parents’ Evening |
| Saturday 2nd March – Saturday 9th March 2019 |  | Ski Trip to Austria  |
| Monday 11th March-Thursday 14th March 2019 |  | Year 11 Core Examinations |
| Friday 15th March – Sunday 17th March 2019 |  | Year 10 Geography Residential |
| Monday 25th March 2019  |  | Teacher Training Day; School closed to pupils |
| Tuesday 26th March – Friday 29th March 2019 |  | Year 7 and 8 Core Examinations |
| Thursday 4th April – Saturday 6th April 2019 |  | Year 10 History Residential |
| Monday 8th April 2019 |  | Year 11 Dance ExaminationYear 9 DTP/Meningitis vaccinations |
| Monday 15th April-Friday 26th April 2019 |  | Easter Holidays  |
| Monday 29th April 2019 | 8.45am | All pupils return to school  |
| *You can always access the school calendar on the website; look under parents/school calendar.* |