

October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: The challenge of social media and school

I write to you following concerns of an increase in non-school related issues that are impacting on our students and their education. Social media platforms such as Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have had a widespread impact on the way in which we communicate and express our thoughts and opinions.

Social media clearly has many benefits for us both as individuals and as communities; many schools including Ark Victoria Academy are exploring how we might best harness this power to engage even more closely with parents and students. Unfortunately, we are also experiencing an increasing number of situations where social media has been the vehicle for inappropriate behaviour by students. 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.

Social media and student bullying

There have been a growing number of situations where we have had to deal with students 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 are most likely to have taken place off the school site and outside school hours, the resulting 'fallout' in such situations can have major implications for harmonious 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. Some recent examples of ill-considered use of social media have caused school staff to spend a disproportionate amount of time trying to manage issues and situations. We would much prefer if this time could be focused on our students' education.

Two common questions:

1. 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.

2. How could the Police get involved?

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

Final thoughts

At Ark Victoria Academy, we pride ourselves on the integration of our named 'values' both into students' academic progress and character development. We strive to demonstrate, and to encourage others to demonstrate, these values - including being helpful, showing kindness,

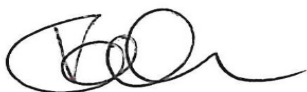
demonstrating compassion, humility, ambition, resilience - in all areas of everyday life. As such, when considering online activity and the use of social media, a broadly accurate guide is that if it falls outside of behaviour and interaction as described and encouraged by these values, it is unwise to proceed. Any form of harassment or bullying will be viewed seriously, whether online or in person, and dealt with under our code of conduct.

The following apps can be used by parents to protect and monitor their child's mobile phone usage.

1. FamiSafe iOS Parental Control
2. Bark Parental Control for iOS
3. Boomerang iPhone Parental Control
4. NetNanny iPad Parental Control
5. Mobicip iPad Monitoring App
6. Kaspersky Safe Kids Parental Control
7. Mobistealth
8. Qustodio iOS Parental Control
9. ScreenTime Parental Control
10. OurPact

We have no wish to stifle debate or students 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 students 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.

Kind regards,



Mrs Chatwin
Associate Head Teacher – Attendance, Behaviour, culture & ethos