

September 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to you in order for the College to make its position clear on our students use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Instagram

This step has become necessary because, like many schools, we find ourselves in a number of challenging and avoidable situations due to students' inappropriate use of social media.

Facebook and social media sites like them are not legitimately accessible through the College network and therefore any access that a student gains during the College day is through the use of mobile phones or devices on their own 3G or 4G network, rather than College network or wifi, an action which is contrary to our policy on their use.

Therefore, the two main points I would like you take from this letter are:

1. The accessing of social media, messaging apps or social networking websites on mobile devices or College computers during the College day is contrary to College policy and if students do so, they should expect to have their phone confiscated and the privilege of using the College network removed.
2. Facebook and other forms of social networking abuse that occurs outside College hours is a private matter for the individuals concerned and not one that the College will be dealing with. Any such issues should be raised with the police and Facebook directly.

With the above points in mind, could we offer these suggestions for minimising online problems:

- Insist, *don't ask*, on being a 'Friend' on your child's Facebook or social media accounts. Do not tolerate inappropriate use on your child's part. If it should persist, cancel their account. Not only are you the bill-payer, but you are the adult and therefore responsible.
- Please point out to your children that participation in online abuse is a criminal offence. This can be as simple as 'liking' an inappropriate comment from another person. The police are treating this issue with the greatest seriousness and the number of prosecutions has been rising across the country.
- Avoid private access to the internet at home. Keep computers in shared spaces such as living rooms wherever possible. A range of security settings and internet filters will be available either commercially or from your Internet Service Provider (ISP). We suggest that parents become familiar with their use and apply them at their discretion.

We accept that social networking can be a useful communication tool. However, like any form of communication it can be abused and I would like you to help us by considering the points made above and taking any appropriate action.

On a more general level, I must stress that your child's use of the internet and mobile devices away from College is entirely your responsibility and therefore we would urge you to take an active interest in their online activities. Advice on how you can do this will follow later.

For your information and future reference, I bring these issues to your attention:

- If you have concerns that your child is being abused online you should save the evidence and contact the police and the website concerned.
- Evidence of use of mobile phones in breach of the college 'Bring your own technology' (BYOT) policy will result in the College taking action against individuals. We would ask both students and parents to bear in mind that we allow our students to have a phone or mobile device with them as a privilege and not a right, and we expect responsible use of any such devices and reserve the right to withdraw that privilege at our discretion
- All UK schools have the power to search their students' phones or mobile devices for evidence where there is grounds to suspect cyber-bullying or any other abuse. The College will not hesitate to use these powers where necessary. If you, or your child feels that these powers constitute an invasion of their privacy, may we respectfully suggest that they do not bring their mobile devices into College.
- During the College day students should not be contacting parents on their own phones or mobile devices in any circumstance (as stated in the College BYOT policy). In an emergency, students should contact a member staff in order that the College can make contact through the numbers that you have provided us. There is no need for any student to use their 'phone at all during the College day.

We also appreciate how widespread the use of mobile devices are and how much of a part of everyday life they have become. However, our priorities are your children's education and their welfare and if their mobile device threatens to disrupt the former and affect the latter, we will have to consider whether we need to consider a ban for individual students.

Later this half term a further letter will be coming out with reference to the stand the Havant Federation of Schools, of which Crookhorn College is part take with regards to social media and its potential abuse.

I am sure you will appreciate our stance on this issue. If you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Potts at the College and he will be happy to discuss this with you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S.Bennett
Headteacher