Wanstead High School

Education with Character

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Headteacher: Miss E Hillman

9th October 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

RE: Responsible Use of Social Media

I am concerned to be writing to you about this matter before we have even reached the end of our first half term. In general, we are so pleased with how Year 7 have transitioned and settled. They have been a real credit to you and their previous schools. However, over the past two weeks we have had to deal with a worrying number of incidents involving the behaviour of some Year 7 pupils in WhatsApp groups and other online spaces.

These are typically large friendship, tutor or year-group chats. While they have no formal association with the school, they can include significant numbers of our Year 7 pupils and, inevitably, what happens within these groups can have a considerable impact on relationships, wellbeing and behaviour in school.

We recognise that these concerns do not relate to every pupil in Year 7. Many of our pupils are making good choices and using social media responsibly. However, the issues have become widespread enough, and involve a significant minority of the year group, that we feel it is important to write to all parents and carers. We hope that, by raising this collectively now and reinforcing the same messages both at school and at home, we can prevent further incidents and help our pupils make safer and kinder choices online.

Our concerns

We have spoken to pupils on a number of occasions about the importance of using social media responsibly and safely, giving very clear and concrete examples of what is and is not acceptable. We also discussed the importance of appropriate social media use with parents and carers during our induction evening in July.

Despite this, this week alone Mrs Lane has spent a significant number of hours investigating incidents arising from pupils' online behaviour. These have included pupils:

- sharing photographs or images of others without their knowledge or consent;
- making derogatory or unkind comments about images and about their peers more generally; and
- most seriously, telling other pupils to harm themselves.

This type of behaviour is unacceptable and does not reflect the values and virtues of our school. Words and actions behind a screen can have a very real impact on another young person. We expect our pupils to treat one another with the same dignity, kindness and respect online as they would face-to-face.

Our expectations

Our expectations of pupils' behaviour do not simply end at the school gate. Our Behaviour Policy extends to behaviour in the community and online where that behaviour impacts members of our school community, relationships between pupils, or the safe and orderly running of the school.

We want pupils to understand that being part of a group chat does not remove their individual responsibility for what they post, say, share, forward or contribute to.

Next week, we will therefore be taking Year 7 pupils off timetable for a further, very specific session on the safe and responsible use of social media, date and time to be confirmed but we will notify you in advance. We will revisit our expectations, discuss what respectful online communication looks like and make clear the consequences where pupils choose not to follow these expectations.

How parents and carers can help

We cannot address this through school alone, and we would really value your support. Please take some time to discuss the contents of this letter with your child and regularly talk to them about, and monitor, their use of their phone and social media.

Please encourage them to think carefully not only about what they post themselves, but also about what they comment on, forward, share or encourage others to do. We want our pupils to enjoy the opportunities that technology provides to communicate and stay connected, but they must learn to do so safely, responsibly and with consideration for others.

A useful parent website can be found here https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/

Developing these habits now is an important part of helping our pupils grow into the kind, thoughtful and responsible young people we know they can be.

If, when speaking with your child or reviewing their online activity, you see or become aware of anything that concerns you, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Lane or myself. We would much rather know about an issue early so that we can respond appropriately and support the young people involved.

Thank you in advance for your support and for reinforcing these important messages at home. By working together, we can ensure that the standards of kindness, respect and responsibility that we expect in school are equally evident in the way our pupils treat one another online.

Yours sincerely



Helise Martin
Deputy Headteacher