

Dear Parent/Carer

You may have seen information in the news about the misuse of social media accounts by students, and the negative impact that these are having on teachers and staff in school. Videos are being created using images of staff in schools, and Instagram accounts are being set up using the names of schools. Many of the images are sexualised, and the language and tone wholly inappropriate. This activity is illegal and could result in prosecutions as malicious communication.

Therefore, we feel that it is appropriate to provide some timely reminders and advice to parents and carers who have responsibility for the actions of their child:

- All the main social media sites should not be used by under-13s and so those students in Year 7 and many in Year 8 should not have an account and we ask that you check that any child under this age is not permitted to access these sites;
- We would like you to sit with your child and look at their phone with them (the accounts they follow, the content they download, and the nature of any messages they are sending their peers). We understand that we all want to trust our children and allow them some privacy and you may feel uncomfortable with this, but as parents and carers you need to be sure that your child is not placing themselves at risk.

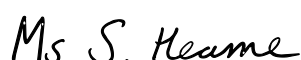
You may believe that your child would not be involved in such activity but please remember that following an illegal account or sharing images (whether your child created them or not) is a serious issue and it is better for you to be safe and ensure this is not the case. Aside from potential illegality, these actions are neither kind nor compassionate and are not in keeping with the ethos we promote.

- We ask that you speak to your child, whatever their age, about the content of this letter and the risks they are placing themselves at if they continue to follow or create such accounts.

Our first concern is the welfare of our students and what they have access to on their phones, but we are also concerned about our staff. There is a real retention crisis in schools in this country, with significant numbers leaving the profession because of the treatment they are receiving from a minority of children. They do not deserve this so we would ask you to make sure that your child is not one of those causing the problem, either directly (by posting such content) or indirectly (by following these accounts or not reporting this activity).

Should our attention be drawn to any of these videos or accounts being linked to staff at The Latimer Arts College, we will make every effort to identify the students involved in creating these accounts and images and take the necessary actions. If sanctions are necessary or the police need to be involved, then we will take whatever action is necessary to protect our staff.

Yours sincerely



Ms S Hearne
Principal