



St. Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy

A Mercy Academy committed to excellence

St. Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy, Thornhill Terrace, Sunderland SR2 7JN.
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Dear Parents/Carers

As one part of our PSHE programme we have recently been working with the Neighbourhood Police Team to raise awareness of the dangers associated with social networking. Police have visited school and delivered presentations about on-line safety and we have continued this theme in assemblies and guidance lessons. We recognise the importance of on-line communication in the lives of young people today, but unfortunately as we have seen in the national press recently there can be dangers. We have put together some advice for parents and carers so that we can work together to keep our children safe.

Advice for parents regarding monitoring social media usage

1. Communicate with your children about their online behaviour. Ask them what they are doing and which sites they are using. Most social media sites stipulate a minimum user age of 13. Make sure that children know how to use the privacy tools provided and that they are aware of the importance of keeping their profiles private.
2. Support your child in ensuring that they only add contacts that they also know and trust off-line. Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online is dangerous.
One way to keep an eye on how your child uses a social networking site is to connect with them.
3. Underline the importance of not publishing or forwarding images and videos which jeopardise their safety or integrity. Nothing which is published on-line can ever be deleted; everything should be assumed to be permanent. Recent studies have indicated that 1 in 4 UK employers visit social media sites to research candidates. They should also ensure that they have permission from others before posting images of them online. It is a criminal offence to circulate inappropriate images of children, even if they are of you.
4. Emphasise the importance of thinking before they post something online. Remind them that messages can be misunderstood online. If they are not sure and would not be happy for their parents and teachers to see it, it is best not to post it. In the south of England two school girls were recently charged as comments they had made online were felt to have contributed to the suicide of another girl.
5. Limit the time your children spend online and do not let them take their devices to bed with them as recent research has shown this to have a detrimental effect on sleep and performance at school. Insist upon device free time during the day; for example at meal times and when your child is doing their homework.



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Remember that as a parent it is your responsibility to ensure that your child is using their online devices appropriately and safely. School staff are also working hard to support you in this. Many issues linked to social media use happen beyond the school day, but can have a major impact upon the happiness and progress of students.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs. M. Shepherd
Head Teacher

Mrs. F. Collins
Assistant Head Teacher



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