



November 2013

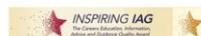
Dear Parents / Carers

I am writing to you because of increasing concerns regarding the misuse of social networking sites amongst some of our pupils and students, most recently on sites such as Ask.fm, Instagram and Snapchat.

As a school, we are concerned that our girls interact with each other appropriately and with respect, both inside and outside of school hours. We take all reports of internet misuse seriously and investigate them. We will take action if our pupils/students are found to have used social media sites to bully other girls, to contact or make comments about members of staff or to bring the school into disrepute in some other way.

Above all, our aims are to prevent misuse and put a stop to online bullying. All pupils and students have been reminded in assemblies, for example, during Anti-Bullying Week of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy, which is available on the school website. This year the theme was Cyber-bullying and girls were asked to stop and think before they post or share something on the internet – about the potential impact for others and for themselves of what they might write in haste or on the spur of the moment. It is in this spirit that I am writing to ask for your help, as parents, in tackling this issue.

You may not have much experience of sites like Ask.fm, Instagram and Snapchat yourselves. We understand that they have fewer of the reporting, tracking or parental control processes that are present on other social media sites. Ask.fm allows anyone to post anonymous comments and questions to a person's profile, whereas Instagram allow for users to set up "fake" profiles to post and share comments and photos. Snapchat allows people to send photos and videos to other users which then disappear after 1-10 seconds. Such sites are increasingly being used as a means to communicate abusive, bullying and sexualised content and we have learnt that information and photos posted on users' Twitter or Facebook profiles is then being taken and used as "ammunition" for abusive posts on these sites. Sites that allow anonymity or content that appears to disappear reduce inhibitions. Children and young people who would not be cruel face-to-face, and who do not see the consequences of their actions, may feel justified saying hurtful things online. Equally, children who would not appear likely to indulge in sexual behaviour in "real life" can get themselves into inappropriate or risky situations online.





We would like you to be aware of the following guidelines and take action, where necessary:

- Seriously consider telling your daughter that she is not allowed to use certain social networking sites.
- Whether you allow your daughter to use certain sites or not, have a conversation with her about appropriate use, including how the anonymous or instantaneous nature of online communication can change the way people behave.
- If you choose to allow your daughter to use Ask.fm, please show her how to use the privacy tab in her settings to block anonymous posts, so that all comments are linked to the names of account holders. Users can also create a blacklist to block comments and posts from certain users.
- Please ensure that, where possible, your daughter adjusts privacy settings so that posts on social networking sites are only seen by those she chooses.
- Please supervise your daughter's activities online, especially on social networking sites. At a minimum, you should have her username/password for sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Ask.fm and sit down with her from time to time to monitor what is happening online.
- If your daughter experiences or witnesses online bullying, tell her not to respond. The best option is to take a print out or screen shot of the offending post and then delete the "app" and the account.
- Please report incidents of online bullying to us or encourage your daughter to do so. Reports can be made to any member of staff in school or Sixth Form Mentor and will be followed up by the Senior Tutor for the year group. Alternatively, pupils, students and parents can use the Sharp System on the school's website to make a report directly to Mrs Bond, Lead Senior Tutor. We also have a team of pupil Anti-Bullying Ambassadors who run a drop-in TV lounge on Tuesday and Thursday lunchtimes and who are trained to provide advice to girls about bullying.
- Further advice on what to do in case of abuse can be found here:  
<http://ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/Parents/>
- Whilst we are not always able to identify the authors of offensive comments or questions posted anonymously, the Police are able to do so and we will contact them about anonymous bullying internet activity which is directed at any pupil





at AGGS. Any girl from this school who is found to have posted offensive or abusive comments online will be dealt with seriously. We do not tolerate bullying by any means at this school.

- For more information for parents about Ask.fm and other online activity, parents are advised to consult the following guides:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Secondary/>;

<http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/about/helpline>; [www.childnet.com/young-people](http://www.childnet.com/young-people)

- We are planning a parent information evening this academic year on the subject of E-Safety and you will be more than welcome to attend.

With thanks in advance for your support and assistance in this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs R Bond  
Lead Senior Tutor

