



**Houlton School**  
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**Michael McCulley**  
Principal

Registered in England  
Company number 07515832

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Dear Parents/Carers

### Re: Safeguarding and Social Media

In line with guidance that is in place to protect and safeguard children, pupils should not have access to any form of Social Media until age 13. The minimum age for all Social Media platforms is **13 years**, with the exception of WhatsApp which has a higher minimum age requirement of **16 years**. Pupils in Year 7 and 8 generally have not yet reached the level of maturity needed to be able to manage the pressures that can be attached to Social Media and we are concerned by the increasing number of issues that are arising out of school hours on Social Media platforms. Increasingly we are seeing cases of bullying, discrimination, prejudice and unkindness, all of which are distracting pupils from their learning, causing upset, and in some cases leading to serious behaviour consequences. Today, several incidents have been reported where pupils are posting photographs of Houlton staff without consent and circulating slanderous rumours, insults and unkindness. We are aware of several pupils who are following, liking and commenting on these sites and have spoken to pupils today about the seriousness of this. Please could we ask that parents/carers support us by **regularly checking phones** and having follow up conversations with pupils around the law relating to consent, in particular circulating images of children or adults without consent. Software is available that would allow you to monitor your child's phone and devices and we strongly advocate the use of this when pupils are under 16.

As parents/carers you will understand that our role in supporting children is to help them understand how to use the internet safely and to build the interpersonal skills that allow them to flourish as active and responsible global citizens. Houlton School expects excellence from all pupils and our core values which pupils are now very familiar with require our pupils to understand that kindness, integrity and acceptance are qualities not only our pupils should have, but that should be modelled in society as a whole.

We have spoken to pupils extensively about the dangers and recommended age requirements around Social Media and have asked parent/carers already for support in ensuring our pupils are not engaging in Social Media platforms. **Our strong recommendation** is that parent/carers remove **all** Social Media from their child and monitor closely their interactions online. We are aware of several emerging WhatsApp groups, some of which contain pupils much older from other schools and highly inappropriate language, discriminatory language and inappropriate images. We will continue to work with our local police liaison officer to reiterate to pupils the importance of staying safe online, of what constitutes a hate crime and of what the legal parameters are around these types of behaviours. As a school, we will deal robustly with incidents of this nature and where appropriate will advise parents to report hate crimes to the police. We appreciate your support in ensuring we are safeguarding the children in our care and urge you to revisit the Social Media platforms and online access that your child has.

Yours faithfully

**C Buckenham**  
Vice Principal

