

5th December 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

Social Media

Today we have uncovered yet again a significant amount of malicious social media activity. This is now having a major impact on Academy life for both students and staff.

There appears to be large groups of students using WhatsApp and Instagram. Posts and messages are inappropriate and put the emotional safety of our students at risk. Some students are reporting that they feel bullied and threatened.

Bolder Academy has worked exceptionally hard with students about how to use the internet safely and also social media. We have also followed up all reported incidences – all of which have occurred outside of school hours. A huge amount of time is being taken up investigating such incidences which ultimately detracts from what we must keep as our focus – delivering a strong education.

This morning, I asked Sergeant Turtle to visit the Academy and to talk once again to some of the students about the harms of social media. He has read some of the social media activity and has informed us and the students that the content of some messages are unlawful and students could in the future be arrested for malicious communication. This is not what we want for our students or our school community.

We have also explained again, to all of the students that they need to be 16 years old to use WhatsApp and 13 years old to use Instagram. This means that no Bolder student should be using WhatsApp and students under 13 years old should not be using Instagram at home or after school hours. We have asked all students to remove themselves from WhatsApp group messages – many of them have 'befriended' people they do not even know.

We are now at a point where we have to ask you once again to monitor your child's phone on a regular basis and ensure appropriate use. **We ask you also to ensure that these Apps have are removed from your child's phone. This we very much see as a parent/carer responsibility.**

We also need to let you know that any future incidences reported to us of malicious communication will immediately be referred to the police and we will ask them to deal with this matter. We will also if necessary use the exclusion policy. We must create an environment where all students feel safe.

I thank you in advance of your support in keeping all Bolder Academy students safe online.

Yours sincerely

Heidi Swidenbank
Headteacher