



# Saint Jude's

## Catholic Primary School

*We live, love and learn together joyfully in Jesus' name.*

10<sup>th</sup> April 2014

Dear Parents

### Safeguarding your child: Social Media

I am becoming increasingly concerned at the access some of our pupils seem to have **at home** to social media websites. Our Designated Senior Person for Child Protection has looked on-line at some of the content from our pupils' sites, which are easily accessible to anyone with an internet connection, and we are troubled by what we have seen. At school we block access to these websites and recommend that parents limit and monitor their young children's internet access at home with their safety foremost in mind.

Today, both Mrs Smith and I have spoken to our Year 5 and 6 children about the benefits and risks associated with social media. It was good to know that the majority of children understood these and knew how to keep themselves safe on-line. However, it is clear that many of our pupils do have access to such sites (some of them without their parents' knowledge) **even though the requirements state that children must be 13 years of age for Facebook and 14 years of age for MySpace to register an account.** I strongly recommend that you to play an active role in discussing social media safety with your child, as many sites are not appropriate for young children, hence the age restrictions.

We have all seen or heard of troubling incidents reported in the media regarding children's use of the Internet. Children are often unaware that what they say and post online gives away a whole host of information about themselves. Social networking sites in particular are very much like online diaries, where students may post personal information about themselves including their name, age and photographs, their likes, dislikes, interests and friends. Some sites also provide features such as instant messaging and email so that visitors, including strangers, can communicate and have a direct discussion with your child.

Children often do not understand the complexity of privacy settings or that once submitted, the information and images sent no longer belong to just them. Friends, family, colleges, future employers, and strangers all have access to and the right to view their material online. Interestingly, our pupils say they would not share this information with a stranger on the street but somehow feel comfortable when sharing it on the Web for everyone to see.

Please do check whether your child has a social media site that you are unaware of or, if you know they have a site, then check the content. No child should be worried about a parent seeing what they have posted on line.

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Have they:

- Used part of their real name as their username?
- Posted a video from their bedroom?
- Posted a video which could identify their location e.g. showing their school logo on a uniform?
- Asked people to contact them e.g with questions about themselves?
- Indicated their favourite places to be or go?
- Included any of their friends in video clips without parental knowledge or permission?

If you see any of these or other things you are worried about, then it is important to talk to you child about the appropriateness of their posts.

As a parent myself, I understand how difficult it is to keep up to date with the changing social media scene, and often have no idea how to access them myself. Children are very adept at using new and ever-changing technologies that often, as adults, we are not. We do however have a responsibility to keep our children safe by asking questions of them and discussing the risks with them

Yours sincerely,

M R Tipping

**Headteacher**

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