

November 2011

Dear Parent

## Safe Use of the Internet Information

We have written to you previously regarding our concerns about the use of social network sites. We are writing again to reiterate our concerns and also to invite parents to a conference on Using the Internet Safely.

The conference is a presentation delivered by Childnet and takes place from 7.00 – 8.00 pm on Tuesday 6 December. This has been offered to parents in previous years. If you have not yet attended then please consider doing so. This presentation is one of a series of Parent Conferences that we will be offering. A separate letter with more details has been sent to you.

Students at Wycombe High School do not have access to social network sites, such as Facebook and MSN at school. Communications via 'forums' can only be made as part of our VLE (Moodle); such 'forums' have an academic focus and are closely monitored. Our school network is tightly controlled to prevent inappropriate access to internet based social network sites. You will also be aware that students in Years 7 -11 are not allowed to carry around or use their mobile phones in school, further restricting access to the internet and of course texting.

We are however becoming increasingly concerned about the inappropriate use of social network sites by students at home, in particular Facebook and Formspring. These two sites are currently very popular but please be aware that new sites are regularly being created and therefore we advise you to monitor for new sites as well as internet usage on a regular basis. Formspring itself can be a particularly damaging site as users can, and often are, anonymous.

It has recently been brought to the school's attention that there has been a significant rise in cyber bullying on Twitter via anonymous profiles. It seems that as fast as a profile is deleted a new one is created. Recent profiles have been, 'BucksBroadcasts', 'BucksDailyBait' and 'BetterThanBait'. These profiles have been anonymously tweeting abusive and damaging messages and publicly humiliating teenagers in Buckinghamshire. We advise all WHS students not to sign up to receive tweets from sites of this nature and to report any concerns to school staff as soon as they arise.

For younger students the inappropriate use of social networking sites, such as Facebook, tends to be about posting personal / hurtful comments. For Middle School students inappropriate use is often related to the amount of time spent 'socialising' on such sites, at the expense of school work. For some students it can become almost an addiction. For all students, providing too much personal data and / or exposing data about themselves and their whereabouts to strangers, is a real concern and a real danger.

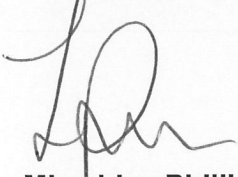
When used inappropriately social network sites cause great harm. In their extreme form, contact with strangers can be made and this poses inevitable dangers. In their less extreme form, but none-the-less highly damaging, arguments / disagreements started in, or out of, school can be carried on in the evenings amongst a wider social group (and often across schools). Such arguments / disagreements are often part of the normal growing up process. However, without adult guidance (from schools, parents etc) these arguments / disagreements, when carried out on social network sites, become exacerbated. Students may often lack the maturity, and/ or skills, to avoid saying something which they will regret or is inappropriate and hurtful to others. We need your support to stop your daughter using these sites until such times as she is old enough to use them sensibly.

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Please note, if it is brought to our attention that your daughter has been involved in using a social network site in an inappropriate way that impacts our school community and / or her safety, work or progress, we will send a letter home to enable you to have an appropriate conversation with her. We will also inform your daughter's form tutor to ensure that the message from school is heard; no student should use a social network inappropriately or in avoidance of studying. Additionally parents do have the right to inform the police if their daughter becomes a victim of internet abuse.

We very much hope that you will continue to work with us to ensure that your daughter's use of the internet is appropriate and sensible. We look forward to seeing those of you who wish to attend the Childnet presentation on Tuesday 6 December.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Phillips', written in a cursive style.

**Miss Lisa Phillips**  
**Head of Middle School**