

4th February 2022

Dear Parent / Carer,

I am writing to you today to highlight my serious concerns about the dangerous use of social media by pupils at Forge Valley.

On Wednesday the school was contacted by an organisation that monitor the use of social media, in particular the use of live streams within platforms such as Facebook and TikTok. I was very alarmed and embarrassed, when told by this organisation, that pupils are using live streams to broadcast themselves over the internet. It is clear that pupils using live streams are putting themselves at great risk.

I have obtained screenshots of one such broadcast involving a pupil. It is clear that these streams are viewed not only by friends but by complete strangers, including much older males, who are making extremely obscene comments to children. These streams are quite often done without parents' knowledge and quite often in the family home.

The school teaches all pupils on how to keep themselves safe online and also signposts parents to where they can gain a better understanding of online safety. It is clear however, that many of our pupils are using social media in a way that is not understood or known by parents. I would suggest that parents undertake the following in order to protect their child:

- Stop your child from using social media, especially if they are under the age of 13. I appreciate that this is easier said than done.
- Please check your child's account and establish who they are following and who follows them. If your child is allowed to use social media, ensure that their friends and followers are personally known. It is clear that some children have thousands of followers most of whom are random strangers. I have seen evidence that young children are followed by adults. This is of the greatest concern.
- Please check that settings are set to private. A public account or stream is viewable by anybody on the planet.
- The school's [website](#) contains advice and support for parents regarding online safety.

The school rules regarding mobile phones state that they are not to be used in school and should be kept in bags switched off. However, incidents involving the use of phones in school and outside of school are taking up far too much of our time. I would therefore like to consult with parents by asking you if you would support an outright ban of mobile phones at Forge Valley School. Please follow this [link](#) to give us your views.

Yours faithfully,



Mr D Barrowclough
Headteacher