Our Ref KWi/MCo

27th September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

We hope your child has had a fantastic start here with us at John Cabot Academy. We are aware that many students in year 7 are given mobile phones for the start of the academic year and, in the past, as a result, we have seen an increase in the number of online bullying incidents.

John Cabot Academy has a strong [**anti-bullying** policy](https://johncabotacademy.clf.uk/policies/); we will not tolerate abuse or threats to students over in person or online. Any evidence provided of abuse or threats of this nature will be followed up as part of our Bullying policy. We will:

* Hold a parental meeting around future conduct
* Place the student on the bullying log
* Require the student to sign a behaviour contract
* Serious incidents will lead to an exclusion
* Repeated acts of bullying will result in escalated sanctions

If any aspect of IT is misused when in the Academy, on our equipment, we will identify and address this misuse. However, most of the inappropriate use of the internet is done from home or on students’ mobile devices during evenings, weekends, and holidays. You will be aware we do not allow mobile phones during the school day; phones will be confiscated if they are seen or heard in the school building between 8:40 and 15:00.

**Recommendations to keep your child safe:**

* The minimum age limit for Snapchat is 13. Delete the app if your child has it downloaded on their phone.
* Check current chats on your child’s phone (this is not an invasion of their privacy) - the responsibility for monitoring a child’s use of social media, devices or indeed the internet in general, must lie with parents/carers.
* The following internet matters link has useful help and advice, including guides for how to secure any device from phones to Xbox and Netflix via a smart TV. There is also a useful guide how to add parental controls for home Wi-Fi for all network providers <https://www.internetmatters.org>
* We strongly encourage you to discuss issues around this with your child, please see attached links and helpline to support your son/daughter <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/><https://www.parentkind.org.uk/Suppliers/National-Online-Safety> O2 NSPCC Advice Line on 0808 800 5002 for advice on apps, sites, games and online safety.
* Students immediately block any user that is abusive, and leave abusive chats.
* Parents report any online abuse/threats to the Police via 101.
* Students only use mobile phones when in communal family areas.
* Parents set time limits, so students have time without phones.
* Students have at least 1 hour of screen free time before bed, possibly using this time to charge mobile phones away from bedrooms.

If your son/daughter has experienced distress due to online activity, please do provide support through the following avenues together with advising their year team at school.

<https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/>

<https://www.kooth.com>

<https://www.otrbristol.org.uk>

I hope that you find this information useful and by all working together, as outlined in this letter, I trust that we can keep all our students safe and well.

Yours sincerely



Kate Willis

Principal