Dear Parent or Carer

I recently wrote to parents of Year 7 students regarding my concerns about the inappropriate use of mobile phones and the potential dangers to our students. Unfortunately, there has been a recent incident involving some older students, and it is, therefore, appropriate that I communicate my concerns to the whole school community.

The issue is that some students are using their smartphones and other mobile devices to access the internet to post harmful comments about each other. Sometimes this is done ‘in jest’; at other times the motives are clearly to cause trouble. Either way, the results can best be described as cyber-bullying with the potential to cause hurt and damage.

Most of the misuse of mobiles is by younger students. This is probably because their naivety and immaturity means they lack the foresight to see the damage they are likely to cause. Many of the postings occur out of school and often late at night, but it is often at school where the repercussions are felt and we therefore have to deal with the problem.

We are tackling the misuse of phones and the internet through assemblies, PD and the work of form tutors, and also by imposing harsher penalties on repeat offenders. I am very grateful to parents who are being vigilant regarding their son’s use of the internet and who are supporting us in trying to keep cyber-bullying and sexting out of school. However, the records of late night messages we see which were posted by some of our youngest students makes it clear that not all parents are aware of what their sons are doing online. Particularly if you are the parent of a Year 7 or 8 student, please monitor his internet use and check any online accounts.

Our policy is that students are not allowed to use their mobile phone or device while in school and if it is seen it will be confiscated. From now on, in order to protect our students while in school, students found to have been involved in cyber-bullying, texting or any other inappropriate use of their mobile will be banned from bringing a phone to school. I recognise that this may not be easy for us to police. However, schools have search powers, and we will use these to make sure that students who have shown themselves incapable of using a phone appropriately are not able to have one in school.

Your ongoing support is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Juliet Diaz
Head of School