

Eketahuna School Students and Social Media

Social media has, to a degree, changed the landscape for interaction between students from when many of us, parents and teachers alike, were at school. Our students now often live out their lives - best and worst moments repeatedly over a vast forum where, at times, there is little understanding and even less forgiveness.

Much social media policy tends to concentrate on safety and legality, which are obviously of prime concern to us as we seek to keep all of the students in our care safe. Our school 'Digital User Agreements' for Junior and Senior students is such a document, which is overwhelmingly about the legal expectations around social media. This enables monitoring to occur at school.

What is more difficult to 'police', but is arguably equally important, is the aspect of responsibility and appropriate use. Many young people engage in activity which, while not explicitly against any legal policy, is certainly morally and ethically questionable, and sadly, at times, inappropriate. We would like to ask you, as parents, to help us to guide your children to online interactions that are sensible, positive, productive, kind and compassionate.

Occasionally, the School is asked to intervene in issues that have arisen due to the use of social media outside of school hours. While we are aware that our responsibility to students does not stop at the School gates, we also must acknowledge that our ability to help students in such situations is heavily reliant on your support as parents, to be guiding your children while we cannot be present.

We would like to ask you to support us in the following ways:

Monitor your children's social media profile and activities – it is important to be aware of the online communities of which your child is a member, not only to know with whom they are interacting, but also to know *how* they are interacting. Do you know what images and words your child is posting, and how these will become part of their, arguably indelible, digital footprint?

Make bed time device free – experts advise that devices should be charged outside of bedrooms, allowing everyone to get a good night's sleep.

If in doubt, remove the device – if your child is sending or receiving messages that are inappropriate or are raising concern or anxiety, take the device away or block those sending such messages.

As parents, although it doesn't always seem so, you have enormous influence over your children. Please help us to make cyberspace safe and productive by all of our students by exercising your influence in the home.

Resources for Parents

Netsafe: Online Safety for New Zealand Information

A parents guide to ensuring childrens safety online

<https://www.netsafe.org.nz/advice/parenting/>

Netsafe: "Cyberbullying"

Information and advice for students and parents

<http://www.cyberbullying.org.nz/parents/>

Netsafe: Social Media Advice for Parents

<https://www.netsafe.org.nz/social-media-parents/>