

Statement from the Governing Bodies and Headteachers from the Havant Federation of Schools:

We all recognise that respectful relationships result in a happier and safer society. The use of modern day technology particularly through the use of **mobile phones and social networking** means that we are more connected as a community than we have ever been before. This communication contributes to greater safety for our young people. As with all forms of technologies there are some drawbacks and disadvantages. As a group of schools there are occasions when we often find ourselves in compromising situations that have arisen when the technology is not used appropriately. In response to this, the Chairs of Governors and Headteachers from the Federation of Schools in the Havant Area have devised this Joint Statement to clarify their position with parents and carers and to ask for your support in this matter.

Below are just two examples of the issues faced by schools and we are asking you to support us so that our students and local community remain safe and that the Havant Area is seen as a pleasant place to live and grow up in.

Situation 1

Social Media issues which start when a child is in the care of parents/carers but which then impacts on the smooth running of the school because what has been posted causes upset and offence to other students.

Social networking has many positive attributes and uses. Social networking is a way of life for our young people and for the majority of adults. Through our education programme and e-safety briefings students are regularly reminded of the advantages and the hidden dangers of using these sites. Increasingly some students and on occasions parents use these sites to try to settle friendship issues that have arisen both in school and the local community. All schools have Anti-Bullying Policies and support mechanisms and where necessary the Police may be informed and involved about any ongoing issues. Often, when social networking is used inappropriately in 'friendship' situations the school is expected to solve the problems. As you would appreciate this is very difficult to achieve. We would ask that parents/carers support us by discouraging the use of social media for such purposes and recognise that should it be used inappropriately the school does not have the legal position to solve the issues.

Equally, we would advise any parent/carer of a child who is being bullied or on the receiving end of unkind comments NOT to post anything on social media as adult involvement rarely solves the issue and is often regarded as antagonistic or even threatening to the minor on the receiving end. Parents/carers are encouraged to seek advice from the school or the police if they are concerned about derogatory comments which have been posted about their child.

We would like to respectfully remind all parents to be aware of unseen consequences that may arise when they post pictures or information about their own or other children on social media. Parents are asked to ensure that their children are aware of this too and that activities or social network sites that students access will form part of their digital footprint and may jeopardise any future opportunities that they wish to apply for.

Situation 2

When a student uses their mobile phone to contact parents/carers during the school day about a situation that has arisen in school.

It is very upsetting for any parent to hear their child report an issue which they have perceived has occurred in school but there are always two sides to any situation and schools are best placed to establish the facts. We would ask parents/carers to respect our guidelines which are that students should not make contact via mobile phone during the school day. If a child does contact a parent it is more helpful for the parent to contact the school for further details before any conclusions are reached. A fairly minor situation which could have been resolved by the school over the course of the day can sometimes become a major issue because a parent has received a one-sided version of events and has chosen to react to what their child is telling them before being given all of the facts. We would ask parents to trust the judgement of the school and abide and support the schools in the restricted use of mobile phones during the school day.

We are grateful to all our parents/carers for supporting us with the appropriate use of mobile phones and social networking.