



Tuesday 27th November, 2017

Dear parents,

Social Media Discussions – Our Response

As a school we foster extremely positive relationships with our students and parents and pride ourselves in establishing open lines of communication between school and home. However, recently we have noticed that a small minority of our parents have been using social media as a tool to raise questions, queries or to voice their dissatisfaction with the school. This has sometimes occurred without these issues being raised directly with the school prior to posting on social media. In some instances users are alleging that school has not addressed issues when in fact the school believes a satisfactory outcome had been reached. It is not our intention to publicly challenge this or enter into a public discussion to defend our actions. The use of social media in this way is rarely productive and has a negative impact on the school, the students and the morale of the staff who are all working hard for the best outcomes for our children. We highly value positive relationships between the staff, the students and you, our parents and we know that many of you are very appreciative. As such these negative comments are from a small number of parents but they do diminish the efforts made to build these relationships and this type of behaviour is never good for the students to witness.

In some instances the comments made have been personal in nature and have questioned the professionalism of individuals. The use of social media to publicly humiliate/slander a member of staff is not appropriate nor can it be accepted. This type of action could result in the school opting to take legal action for defamation of character.

We have always been clear that we are keen to address any concerns that you may have and are happy to speak with you individually if you are worried about an aspect of school life or your child's education. If you were still not satisfied after taking up this opportunity, you may use the school complaints procedure available from the School Office and on the school website. We would therefore urge any of you who do have concerns to raise them with us directly and always sooner rather than later so that we can work together to reach a conclusion.

Attendance Policy

One of the main reasons our students are so successful is the strong partnerships we enjoy with parents in encouraging 100% attendance and punctuality for all students. This ties in with our aim to enable and encourage all members of the community to reach out for excellence. All research shows that students who attend well, are more likely to achieve. Each hour in school is a valuable learning experience that cannot be recovered. Everyone associated with the school – students, parents, all teaching, support staff and external agencies must do all in their power to ensure that excellent attendance and punctuality remain an integral part of the school's work.

With these considerations in mind we continually review our attendance policy, which can be found on the school website (www.tarletonacademy.org/parents/attendance-information). It clearly defines the roles of students, staff and parents as well as detailing the actions the school could take in our duty of care for the young people within our community. Please be aware that home visits may form part of this action, particularly when we

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have not received daily notification of an absence or have been unable to make contact with the student's parents, as this signifies we may have a student who is potentially missing and therefore at risk.

Chromebook Project

We are in the second year of our 'Chromebook for Learning Project' and the realisation of a vision of all students using the Chromebooks to support and enhance their learning. Currently the majority of Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 students have opted into the scheme and it is proving very successful. Those students who have not opted in do have access to a Chromebook or a laptop with identical usability, on a daily basis, to ensure the no one is disadvantaged, although they are not allowed to take these home and only use them on a lesson by lesson basis.

Unfortunately, we have had some issues with the supplier which are completely out of our control and we are behind where we planned to be in terms of distribution of the Chromebooks. As stated in the email sent to parents last week we have been assured that all the outstanding Chromebooks will be received the week beginning Monday 11th December. This is incredibly frustrating for us as it is for those who have ordered Chromebooks but not yet received them.

A number of questions have been raised regarding the security settings on the Chromebooks. The 'Acceptable Use Policy' (AUP) states that there would need to be security settings in order to protect the school's network. This AUP has been accepted by parents when opting into the scheme. Despite this we are reviewing these settings in response to questions raised. Please be assured that the controls in place are to ensure that the integrity of the school computer network and the students' learning experience are not compromised. The primary aim of this is to safeguard our students' online access and what they could be exposed to, along with virus/malware protection.

Keeping up-to-date with what's going on

If you would like to keep in touch with what is taking place at the academy without having to contact us directly then please use the new school website (www.tarletonacademy.org) and follow us on twitter (@tarletonacademy) or Facebook (Tarleton Academy). We also have a FREE parental app which can be downloaded to a smart phone or tablet by following the prompts below:

1. Search 'Schudio School App' on 'Google Play' (Android) or 'App Store' (IOS).
2. Download the app
3. Search for Tarleton Academy and select. Allow push notifications so you can receive key information direct to your device.

This will give you a direct access to news, events, blogs, announcements, term dates etc.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many, many parents that show their regular appreciation for the support their children receive from a dedicated and talented staff. I am very proud to be a part of such a fantastic school and wider community.

Thank you in anticipation for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

M Cunniffe
Head of School

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