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Dear Parents/Carers,

As you will be fully aware, the Internet has become a powerful tool with which to connect and share ideas and opinions. In recent years, social networking sites such as Facebook have grown in popularity and many people use them to communicate with family, friends and others. Obviously it is important to act as positive digital role models and indeed the vast majority of people who use social networking show respect in their communication with others. Unfortunately, like other aspects of society, there are people who disregard the rules set and use social networking sites to cyber-bully or harass others.

Recently, there have been a number of high profile cases in the media where people have used social networking sites to threaten or intimidate others.

I am writing to inform you that the Local Authority monitor Facebook and if school names are used on Social Media sites they are informed. I am aware that some parents of pupils at our school are posting items on Facebook naming and commenting on members of our staff and pupils. As a school, we encourage parents to support us with the education and well being of children and if at any time parents feel that they have any issues regarding their child's education, they should make an appointment to discuss this with me in person. It is not however, appropriate to use social networking sites to openly criticise and make unsubstantiated, damaging comments about the school or any members of our staff or children who will be either unwilling or unable to respond.

I would prefer not to go down the line of having to send out legal letters from our solicitors to parents about comments made on social networking sites. However, current laws such as the 1988 Malicious Communications Act, 1997 Protection from Harassment Act and 2003 Communications Act can be used to protect individuals from malicious and threatening posts made on the Internet. The victims might also choose to bring civil actions for defamation or slander. ***The Chair of Governors, Lynn Stephenson, and I wish it to be known that all necessary action will be taken to deal with any material posted on such sites that is in our opinion distressing, alarming or harassing or in any way breaches the rights of the members of our school community. We will have no hesitation in asking the Police to investigate or as the case may be, in instituting legal proceedings.***

We are sorry that it has been necessary to write this letter. We understand that the overwhelming majority of parents have only the best interests of the school at heart and would not become involved in such an activity. However, unfortunately the actions of a few have necessitated it.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Robson, Head Teacher

Mrs Stephenson, Chair of Governors

