



# New Haw Community School

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5<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

### ONLINE ABUSE

Yesterday, we were made aware by a parent, of an image being circulated on social media of a member of our staff, accompanied by a very offensive comment. Equally shocking was that this image had been created and circulated by pupils in our school.

As you can imagine, an incident such as this causes considerable distress and upset to the individual, and is taken extremely seriously by the school.

Unfortunately, today we have been made aware that photographs of other members of staff have also been shared online by pupils. We are taking this matter extremely seriously and dealing with it accordingly.

We are aware that an increasing number of pupils are given access to social media apps such as Whatsapp, Snapchat and TikTok. Whilst we understand the social pressure to allow your child to engage in these forms of communication with their peers, the majority of these apps are for those aged 13 or over and we cannot emphasise strongly enough that they are not a suitable means of communication for children under this age.

If you do choose to allow your child to access social media platforms, we ask for your utmost vigilance in monitoring their online activity. It is important that parents support the school by reiterating the message that what is wrong in face-to-face interactions, is also wrong on the internet.

Please remind your children that online abuse or cyber harassment towards anyone may constitute a criminal offence. The school will take any such incidents extremely seriously and any such abuse committed by pupils, parents or the public towards school staff will be treated as such, and – as with these recent incidents - reported to the police.

***Cyber bullying, or online harassment are offences under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 and Section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and may also be subject to legal action under the law on defamation.***

Sadly, as a consequence of the events over the last 2 days, we have had to take the decision to remove the photographs of all staff and governors from our school website with immediate effect.

We are asking you as parents and carers to be extra vigilant and to work with us in addressing these very serious issues to ensure the online safety of staff, pupils and our wider community.

Yours sincerely

Mrs M T Cahill  
Executive Headteacher