



E-Safety



All schools, rather like the society we are part of, have to contend with a very rapid pace of change in technology. This can of course bring some very significant advantages if used properly, but it can also bring some worrying problems when misused. Furthermore, technology and especially the power of the internet and mobile communication is developing so quickly that it is not possible to have a set of guidelines, or rules for use, that can ever guarantee to cover all situations.

Nevertheless we have tried to produce some simple, general guidelines which we believe cover the most significant uses. I am very grateful to Dr Colin Diggory, Headmaster of Alleyn's School, London for his help in compiling these. However, it is important to stress that it is not possible to give advice which covers every possible scenario. It is essential to use common sense and judgement, based on these guidelines, in situations not covered here.

My main concern is that some of our pupils seem to be unaware of how easy it is for anyone to see and read what they think they are writing in private. It can also be very shocking for them to discover that what they have said, or film clips that they have posted, are potentially available forevermore on the internet once they are copied. Finally they seem to be unaware of the possible serious consequences of misusing this technology. It is very easy to commit an offence which is actually illegal (such as defamatory comments about a teacher for example) or which could lead to possible suspension or exclusion.

Therefore would you please bring to your son's and/or daughter's attention the final section of these guidelines which lists a set of 'Remembers'?

'Caution' is the watchword; I do not believe that there is any need for alarm because I am sure that most of our pupils will be well aware of the dangers and risks involved and also most will understand the consequences of inappropriate use. However, I am most concerned about the few who may use it inappropriately either by accident or design.

Some comments made may be hurtful or defamatory to, or about, others who attend Stockport Grammar School or any other school. If such an entry mentions Stockport Grammar School, or is thought to have originated here at Stockport Grammar School, then those identified will have broken our Acceptable Use Policy and also possibly have brought the school into disrepute. They would then face the school's disciplinary sanctions.

Access to such sites from our internet service was blocked several years ago. Pupils can neither read them nor write to them from the school's PCs. However, your son or daughter could be accessing such sites from your home PC or a friend's PC or directly from their mobile phone anywhere in school or at home.

Andrew Chicken

Andrew Chicken
January, 2008



facebook

YouTube

Bebo

msn





Guidelines for using interactive web sites, chat rooms, mobile phones, messaging and the internet - and possible serious consequences

It is not possible to cover every aspect of this wide topic and indeed it would probably be unhelpful to give too much detail in a brief paper such as this for it would risk losing a focus on the key issues facing all schools today. Instead this summary advice is intended to help promote discussions at home about the acceptable use of text messaging, mobile phones and the internet and the possible dangers and consequences of their misuse. An excellent web site for further advice is www.antibullying.net/cyberbullying1.htm and I have included, *in italics*, some edited key extracts:

The Benefits of Technology

This information may make the Internet, or mobile phones, or email accounts all seem rather dangerous - but technology is morally neutral and can be a channel for comfort as well as threats. The phone line that carries a threatening text message may also carry information and advice to an anxious parent or a worried child. Whilst technology can be used to bully, the Internet also can be a sanctuary for the victims of bullying by masking their "differences" and allowing them to be part of communities beyond their local one.

The Problems

The digital age has seen the development of new ways in which to bully, slander and abuse. We are now faced with bullying by email, over the phone and by text message; with the use of digital cameras and camera phones to intrude on the privacy of individuals;

with so-called 'happy slapping' attacks - the filming and sharing of physical attacks on individuals by groups; the posting of offensive websites; the impersonating of individuals through hijacking email accounts; abusive and threatening behaviour in chat rooms, on discussion boards and through instant messaging.

We have also seen reports of school reunion sites being used to slander ex-pupils and teachers alike. Recently a phenomenon called "blue jacking" (the sending of anonymous text messages over short distances using "Bluetooth" wireless technology) has been reported.

All these examples of cyber-bullying may be taking advantage of cutting edge technology, but the motives of those who are doing this and the excuses they make for their behaviour are age old.

Some Issues

- Technology allows the user to bully anonymously or from an unknown location, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.*
- No place, not even a bedroom, provides sanctuary from the intrusion of a threatening text message or an abusive e-mail.*
- Cyber-bullying leaves no physical scars so it is, perhaps, less evident to a parent or teacher, but it is highly intrusive and the hurt it causes can be very severe.*
- Young people are particularly adept at adapting to new technology, an area that can often seem a closed world to adults. For example, the numerous acronyms used by young people in chat rooms and in text messages (POS - Parents Over Shoulder, TUL - Tell You Later) make it difficult for adults to recognise potential threats.*

Some simple practical advice for users of web messaging or text messaging

- ☞ If you feel you are being bullied by email, text or online, **do** talk to someone you trust.
- ☞ Serious bullying **should** be reported immediately to the police and the School - for example threats of a physical or sexual nature.
- ☞ Contact the service provider (mobile phone company, your internet provider) to tell them about the bullying and to report immediately any abuse.
- ☞ Use blocking software - you can block instant messages from certain people or use mail filters to block emails from specific email addresses.
- ☞ **Don't** give out your personal details online - if you're in a chatroom, watch what you say about where you live, the school you go to, your email address etc. All these things can help someone who wants to harm you build up a picture about you.
- ☞ **Don't** ever give out passwords to your mobile or email account.
- ☞ Switch the Bluetooth visibility setting to 'No' on mobile phones and laptops.



SMS



Advice on web sites specifically designed for communication and chatting online



Facebook, YouTube, Bebo and **My Space** are the names of the four most currently well known and popular websites which your children will most probably have come across and the majority will be using and/or visiting on a regular basis. There are, of course, other ways to chat on line or exchange messages but these are

currently thought to be the most popular and the advice applies to all methods and web sites for this purpose.

Used sensibly such interactive web sites can be very useful in terms of communication or keeping in touch with friends. Most of it is entirely harmless but we need to be aware and vigilant that some content can be cruel and harmful, even illegal. The sites are not rigorously censored in terms of content. For example, on YouTube, a video site, the BBC is putting video trailers for its forthcoming TV Programmes but others, however, are putting films showing the whole of the execution of Saddam Hussein and other totally inappropriate video material. The other two sites allow 'members' to write about themselves, and other people of course, some of which can be hurtful, derogatory, bullying or simply unpleasant. Video content can be viewed straight away, although for some other access users have to register their details on the site. My Space asks people to sign up immediately whereas Bebo lets you see some material but then expects you to join and become a 'Beboer'. Facebook only requires a user name and e-mail address to sign up.





All parents should be aware of these sites and be concerned about possible misuse. All pupils will probably be familiar with them but they certainly need to be aware of potential dangers to themselves and others and also of the possible/likely long term consequences of some of their actions.

Access to these sites is very easy. Your son or daughter may already be a member of them and a contributor, not just a reader of material. That means they have access to material which you and the school may well consider unsavoury. The users of these sites have the ability to create their own material and post whatever they like on to their site i.e. films, pictures or text. Because it is accessed solely by user identification and a password, it is their choice who views it and whom they choose to pass it to.

Ask your son or daughter if they use the sites at all. If they do, depending on their age you might consider asking to discuss or see the files, pictures or films they have uploaded. You could, for peace of mind's sake, look for software programmes that will monitor and, if necessary, ban access to these [and other] sites. Suitable "content watch" software can easily be found with an internet search.

However, I am aware that as our children progress through adolescence it is also important to respect their privacy. Furthermore, since it is so easy to access other computers, I think that education about sensible use and the possible consequences of misuse is far more effective than trying to set up such software at home, particularly for secondary age children. It is, after all, in their own interest to learn how to use technology safely and responsibly.



Go online....

I strongly recommend that you visit these sites and see for yourself what is being said and more importantly the potential of what could be said or shown.



www.myspace.com



www.youtube.com



www.bebo.com



www.facebook.com

Possible serious consequences of misuse of the internet or mobile phones









In summary

Technology is morally neutral and it can be used to our tremendous advantage as a force for good. The key to maintaining such positive use is through constantly reminding ourselves of the potential dangers and serious consequences, without being too alarmist.

One of the biggest problems for young people is in understanding that what they say or write in the privacy of their small group will potentially be seen by the whole school community. No matter how secure a discussion group may appear, it must be understood that a permanent record is created of any comments or actions when it is entered into an electronic medium.

It is therefore essential for pupils to be aware of the following 'Remembers' which are there to help prevent problems and should not be seen as purely punitive or threatening. They are simply common sense, logical consequences of misusing communication technology but can easily be forgotten in the false sense of privacy that some internet users develop.

Please would you discuss these consequences with your son/daughter?

-  **Remember** that even if you password protect your messages, others may forward them on to open sites and others may well see what you have said or posted.
-  **Remember** that if you lose your phone or lend it to someone else then you risk all your personal information being seen.
-  **Remember** that once you post something on to the internet it is effectively there forever. It can be seen in years to come by future employers, family members and friends. It may seem to be anonymous and private but it isn't - you should act as though everything that you write or post could, and will, be seen by absolutely anyone!
-  **Remember** that misusing a mobile phone or camera (for example, to photograph anyone or anywhere at School without permission) will perhaps result in serious disciplinary sanctions and possible legal action.
-  **Remember** that posting anything hurtful or defamatory to, or about, others who attend Stockport Grammar School is likely to result in serious disciplinary sanctions.
-  **Remember** that posting anything hurtful or defamatory to, or about, a teacher at Stockport Grammar School will most probably result in serious disciplinary sanctions (most likely suspension or exclusion) and possible legal action from the School or a teaching union.
-  **Remember** that posting anything which could bring the School into disrepute will most probably result in serious disciplinary sanctions (most likely suspension or exclusion) and possible legal action.
-  **Remember** that sending abusive or threatening messages is not only against the School's rules it is against the law.