



24th January 2012

Important: Facebook E-Safety Concerns

Dear Parent / Carer,

I would like to make you aware of a recent internet safety issue that we have identified as a result of information provided to us by some of our students. We have learned of a Facebook user posing as a local teenager who has 'added' many students at both Sandbach School and Sandbach High School as friends despite not being known to them. Following this, the individual has actively engaged students in online chat, making inappropriate sexual references, as well as asking students to enter private chat rooms using web-cams, and attempting to arrange to meet them.

As a school we take internet safety very seriously and have interviewed a number of students in connection with this matter. None of the students we have interviewed have actually met or know that the person or profile is real and since beginning our investigation on Friday, the user profile in question has been withdrawn from Facebook. To ensure the safety of the students in question we have made contact with the Police and informed them of the situation. They are conducting further investigations. We have also contacted www.ceop.police.uk which is a national and international agency investigating child exploitation and online protection.

During your son's time at the school he will have had exposure to E-Safety sessions as part of his pastoral curriculum and as a parent, you may remember that it has been a feature of key parents' information evenings at the start of years 7 and 10. However this issue has highlighted the fact that children are still very vulnerable online as a result of the habits that they develop. As a result I feel that there are certain potential issues that parents should be reminded of:

- 1) It is extremely inadvisable to have friends and contacts on social networking sites that you don't know or have never met. During our investigations, many students have demonstrated how many young people do this anyway.
- 2) For obvious reasons it is potentially dangerous to arrange to meet people that you have only spoken to online. Students are strongly advised against this throughout their PSHCE sessions at school.
- 3) There is a wider issue about internet privacy and parents knowing what their children are doing whilst online. As a school we would strongly advise that you speak to your child about this matter and ask them to go through their social networking profiles with you so that you are happy that their activities are safe.
- 4) For details and information on the E-safety and CEOP sessions that we run at school, please visit the school website and follow the 'Internet Safety' links.

If you have been concerned about your child's activity on the internet and would like to discuss it further, please contact his Head of Year, or visit www.ceop.police.uk for help and advice.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S. Burns
Headteacher

