1st March 2017

Dear Parents,

**Pupil use of Social Media**

As a school safeguarding and children’s welfare is the most important aspect of our work. We are committed to ensuring that children are kept free from harm and that we consider at all times what is in the best interests of the children who attend our school.

It has recently come to our attention that some of our Year 5 and 6 children have been communicating via Instagram. It seems that they have been doing this without any adult supervision and unfortunately some of the children have used inappropriate language and published unkind comments about other children at the school.

Although this is something that is happening outside of school the repercussions are very much brought into school with children telling other children what is being written about them and arguments consequently ensuing which the teaching staff then have to sort out.

Children under the age of 13 should not be using Instagram or any other social media sites. The minimum age to open an account on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Kik and Snapchat is 13. You Tube requires an account holder to be 18 but a 13 year old can sign up with a parents’ permission. None of the children who attend St. Mary’s are old enough to have an account and therefore they should not be posting on social media.

We are asking parents to reinforce this message at home and be vigilant in checking that your child is not using social media sites. If they are, and you are allowing them to do so, we would ask you to monitor what they are posting and receiving so they do not get themselves into trouble.

We teach the children about internet safety through our computing curriculum and PSE lessons however the Y5 and 6 teachers will be following this up with further internet safety sessions, particularly on responsible use of the internet. We will also be organising further sessions for parents on internet safety. We will inform you as soon as these have been arranged.

Some children in Year 5 and 6 are also bringing mobile phones into school. We would advise that children should not need to bring a phone into school at this age. If children need to contact their parents they can do so via the school office. In exceptional circumstances some children may need to have a phone on them for after school, if this is the case then the phone must be handed to the class teacher when they arrive at school and it will be kept in a secure safe place for the day and given back to the child at home time.

Thank you for your support with this. I know you will want to help us in ensuring children stay safe.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Woolley (Headteacher)