



Charities Reg. No. 1049894

Caedmon School
Airy Hill
Whitby
North Yorkshire
YO21 1QA

Tel: 01947 602570

Fax: 01947 820315



Healthy School



Science



CAEDMON SCHOOL

North Yorkshire Education Committee

Head teacher: Mr R A Hewitt B.Ed (Hons), MA, NPQH

E-mail: admin@caedmon.n-yorks.sch.uk

www.caedmon.n-yorks.sch.uk

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Dear Parents/Carers

Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) CEOP warns over 'alarming new trend' in online sex abuse

I am sure the title of this letter has already gained your attention. This was the headline on the BBC News on 4 February 2013 and some people may think that what you see or hear on the News does not apply to us living in Whitby; unfortunately in this case it does.

In recent weeks, there have been two significant incidents involving children's use of Facebook have come to our attention. Through our resulting investigations, we have found that it is very easy for total strangers to look at some of our students' Facebook pages and the huge amounts of associated content. If the correct security settings are not in place it is possible that your child's Facebook page may be completely open to anyone, whereby they could view photographs of you, your children, your home and your holidays. Comments that people have made about photographs are also available and even from that small amount of information people can build up a picture of you and your child's lives. Even if your child regularly changes their profile picture, all previous profile pictures are held on Facebook so it can be very difficult to keep information totally secure.

Working alongside the Police and the Head of Year, within 2-3 clicks of the mouse, I was able to access material on children's Facebook pages which was considered inappropriate. I have also seen examples whereby not only was a child's Facebook open to anyone, but the parents and friends of this child had their Facebook page open to prying eyes as well.

In assembly last week I explained the dangers to our students and advised them to make sure that they made their Facebook sites secure so that only their friends could see what was on their page. When I say friends I refer only to other children they actually know and not the hundreds or even over one thousand 'friends' they have accepted. We would suggest that, if you are not already, you become your child's friend on Facebook as this will allow you to closely monitor what they are doing and allow you to respond appropriately if you feel your child is putting themselves in danger.

Children are spending increasingly more and more time on their iPad, iPhone or computer communicating with each other via messaging and Facebook pages. It is even possible to speak to people over the Internet using games machines such as Xbox and Nintendo. Therefore we would like to remind parents/carers to closely monitor their child's use of a wide range of facilities available via Smart Phones, Laptops and iPads etc. as it is really important that you and the school keep their lives safe.



Whilst we do not wish to alarm parents/carers, we do have a duty of care towards our students and we just wish to raise our concerns for their safety in the cyber world, in which they spend so much time.

If you wish to find out more about this please visit the school's website at www.caedmon.n-yorks.sch.uk and click on 'Parents' page where you will find information on eSafety and Facebook Security Setting. Please take the time to read these very carefully and regularly check that your own and your child's Facebook page is kept as secure as possible.

Assuring you of our best intentions at all times.

Yours sincerely

Mr R A Hewitt
Headteacher