



ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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OUR REF :

TRN : 10025995510003

Friday, 6th September 2024

To **Parents of students in Years 5 – 13**
CYBERBULLYING/ BULLYING / INAPPROPRIATE USE OF
OR BULLYING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Dear Parents,

Greetings from Saint Mary's. I am sure that every child is precious to every parent and it is our duty to safeguard every child in the school. We at St. Mary's hold this sentiment close to our hearts and we strive to offer all students a hazard free and emotionally safe environment in which they can achieve their full academic and personal potential. In light of this it has been a rather disappointing experience to have learned that some students have been resorting to Cyberbullying with the intention to emotionally and psychologically hurt another child or other children.

We have recently been made aware of several accounts on Instagram that are using the school name and logo with content that is racially offensive, sexually inappropriate , has targeted staff and students by name in a manner that is vilifying and degrading.

Several senior students especially in years nine and ten have been identified as following these accounts, commenting on and even liking the offensive content.

Some of these accounts are **smchs_confess, smchs_sleep, smchs_eating, smchs_slapping** etc. **The school has provided all information regarding these accounts to the e-crime division of Dubai Police and those involved will have to face subsequent consequences as all that has been described goes completely against UAE cultural as well as cybercrime laws.**

Please review your children's social media accounts, so you may advise them appropriately.

We believed that our O-Level students are mature enough to handle their devices in school but we have seen that a large majority of them have been following these accounts and so we will now be requiring them to hand in their phones every morning to their class teachers.

We would like for every parent to carefully go through the KHDA Parent-School Contract over the weekend with your child as well as this letter to be well reminded of the school's zero-tolerance policy for bullying in all its forms and the potential consequences that might arise from any behaviour that constitutes bullying. We will be updating our Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Policies and shall make these available to you shortly.

FROM THE KHDA PARENT-SCHOOL CONTRACT

The school has a zero-tolerance policy for bullying in all its forms. Bullying is the intentional and deliberate intimidation of another person through emotional, physical. Psychological and / or cyber means. Instances of proven and intentional bullying may result in immediate suspension of the aggressor from the school. The matter will be referred to KHDA for ratification.

Aligned with the above, the school will not tolerate any form of defamation or intentional harm practiced through social media forums. The school has set clear policies for parents and students about the use of and participation in social media outlets and/or forums and these centre around UAE guidelines and protocols such as:

- 1) Parents and students in all year groups using any social media forum, must at all times, demonstrate respect for the members of the school community (including all students and personnel)
- 2) Parents and students must not breach confidentiality , defame or make threats to any person in the school community. Instances of proven and intentional breach of the above will result in sanctions which may include SUSPENSION from school.

WARNING LETTERS WILL BE ISSUED IN CASES WHERE ANY FORM OF BULLYING HAS BEEN OBSERVED: These letters will be also sent to KHDA and will be placed on the students' personal file.

- 1) The First Warning letter will be issued with clear cut details of consequences that will follow should the behaviour in question be repeated.
- 2) The Second Warning letter will result in a one-day suspension from school along with details of further consequences.
- 3) The Third Warning letter will result in a three-day suspension from school with the potential permanent suspension from the school after consultation with the KHDA.

The school also reserves the right not to re-enroll students for the following Academic Year when behavioural issues are repeated. This will be documented by the school through the issuance of dated warning letters supported with evidence and after obtaining KHDA approval.

We appeal to ALL parents to kindly make frequent checks on your children's use of Social Media as well as checking the statutory age limits for holding certain Social Media Accounts . While some parents may feel that checking on their Children's social media is intrusive, evidence that we have seen of many children's use of social media strongly points to the old adage 'It is better to be safe than sorry'.

We trust that this reminder will be taken seriously by ALL parents and that you will set up a dedicated time this weekend to go over this letter with your children.

Yours Sincerely,



Mr. Paul Asir Joseph
(Principal)

