



Dear Parents/Guardians,

We wanted to take a moment to address social media in the lives of our students in Scoil Dara. Social media is a big part of social and creative life for many pre-teens and teenagers. Social media can have its benefits and can be a powerful tool for communication, it helps people connect with friends, find like-minded communities with common interests and it can be quite fun.

However, if used excessively and inappropriately, it can negatively impact on a teenager's life. It can lead to being exposed to inappropriate or upsetting content, sleep disturbance, less contact with peer groups, missing out on human connections and in particular for girls, constant comparisons to others.

Furthermore, social media can also be a platform for cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is when someone uses digital technology, such as social media, to harass, intimidate, or embarrass someone else. This can have serious negative effects on the victim's mental health and well-being.

To mitigate the risk of cyberbullying and the general negative impact device usage can have, we in Scoil Dara ask parents and guardians to work with us to achieve a common goal, to educate our students on how to use social media responsibly, respectfully, and safely. We believe that by working together, we can create a safe and supportive environment for all students. Through our 3RC, SPHE, RSE, restorative practice and wellbeing programmes, we



promote empathy and understanding and create a safe place to engage in open dialogue about issues that students face today.

We ask parents to encourage your child to think before they post or comment, and to avoid engaging in negative or hurtful conversations online. Additionally, it is important to monitor your child's social media use and have open communication with them about any concerns you may have. We ask that you encourage your child to foster genuine relationships outside of social media, and to use the platform in a way that supports positive relationships and healthy communication.

It can be hard to ban social media, even for younger children. This is because social media is increasingly a part of children's apps, games, websites and learning environments. Instead, it is better that we teach your child how to navigate social media risks and behave respectfully on social media.

As parents/guardian we ask that you read our Anti Bullying policy published on our school website with your son/daughter so that they are aware of the procedures that our school use to implement the Anti-Bullying Guidelines. The safety and well-being of our students is of utmost importance to us, and we take bullying extremely seriously.

In accordance with the guidelines, our school has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, and we are committed to creating a safe and secure environment for all our students. The following procedures are currently in place to ensure that we can identify and address bullying effectively:

- Prevention: We are committed to promoting positive relationships within the school through regular anti-bullying initiatives that focus on developing empathy,



understanding, and respect. This includes teaching our students about the negative effects of bullying and empowering them to stand up against it.

- **Reporting:** We strongly encourage our students to report any incidents of bullying to a teacher. We take all reports seriously and will investigate each case thoroughly.
- **Investigation:** We have a detailed procedure in place to investigate any reports of bullying. This includes speaking to all parties involved, gathering evidence, and following a step-by-step process to determine the nature and extent of the bullying. We will keep all parties informed at every stage of the investigation.
- **Intervention:** If bullying is confirmed, we will take appropriate action in line with our school's Code of Behaviour. This may include counselling, mediation, or disciplinary action.
- **Follow-up:** We will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the bullying has stopped and that all parties are safe and supported. We will also provide ongoing support to the victim of bullying, including counselling and access to resources that can help them deal with the emotional effects of bullying.

As you are aware, a number of cyberbullying issues that arise take place outside of school and there are limitations to how the school can respond to these issues. In such cases we advise the Gardai are contacted on 01-6757390 or alternatively on 01-6667800.

We will be holding an assembly for students to remind students of our Anti-Bullying Guidelines and the negative effects that bullying can have on all involved. We want to make sure that everyone is aware of the consequences of bullying, not just for the victim but for the bully and those who witness it.



We ask that you support us in our efforts to prevent and address social media and bullying issues should they arise. If you have any concerns or questions about our Anti-Bullying Guidelines, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

D. McCormack