

**Headteacher**

John Galvin

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Dear Parent / Carer,

**Social Media**

I have been made aware that there have been a few recent instances of quite negative comments appearing on social media, relating to a variety of aspects of school life. These comments tend to get referred to us by concerned individuals who feel they are inappropriate. Such publically shared negative comments can work to undermine the school's relationship with the parent community and can be damaging to the school's reputation. Just as significantly, there is also often a human cost in terms of the upset that can be caused to children and staff.

A survey by the NASUWT (the largest teachers' union) in 2014, found that teachers were being increasingly adversely affected by the abuse of social media. More than a fifth (21%) of respondents reported having had adverse comments posted about them on social media sites. Facebook was the most commonly cited forum for online abuse.

At Petworth CofE Primary School, we work really hard to get things right but, inevitably; we sometimes make decisions with which some parents may not agree. Sometimes, this difference of opinion arises from the school having access to a fuller picture of a particular situation. Sometimes it arises because people hold different opinions and you simply cannot please all of the people all of the time. Sometimes, of course, it arises because we have made a mistake or an error of judgement; we are only human. As the Bible states, John 8:7, *'Let anyone of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her'*.

We teach the children to not believe everything they read on the Internet through our e-safety lessons and when they complete research. If we did not then the children's safety would be compromised and the children may put themselves in danger or believe certain myths / propaganda about individuals or the world. As adults we must also do the same. It is such a shame that individuals will resort to using social media sites to vent their anger and others believe everything they read.

I get angry, disappointed and stressed like everyone, but would never dream of venting my anger so the world can see and for that moment feel important. I am also very thankful that everybody does not believe everything they read as there always at least two sides to the story. I am a firm believer that if you have an issue you try and work things out. We are committed to our open door policy and we will always do our very best to see any parent with a concern. We take concerns seriously and we aim to deal with them quickly.

Nevertheless just to highlight how seriously I am taking this issue, I have also been advised by West Sussex County Council Legal Services to report any matter to the Sussex Police for them to note and take action where appropriate under the Malicious Communications Act or anti-social behaviour legislation. Where other schools have reported similar concerns, the police have visited the individuals concerned, and a crime number has been noted on police records.

I am sure that I will be not be put in a position of resorting to reporting 'posts' to the police as since I have arrived at Petworth CofE Primary School, the school has had nothing but support. All I ask now is that you do not make negative comments about the children from Petworth CofE Primary School, members of staff and the school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Galvin', written in a cursive style.

John Galvin  
Headteacher