

SOCIAL MEDIA @ TE PUNA WAI O WAIPAPA HAGLEY COLLEGE

There have been a growing number of situations where schools have had to deal with students using social media to deliberately cause emotional harm to others.

What generally starts as harmless and fun online interactions can quickly spiral into on-going interactions that become extremely unpleasant and even damaging for the students involved.

While these interactions often take place outside of school hours, the resulting distress flows into the school and impacts friendships, learning and attendance.



Parents often look to the school for support and guidance, with the expectation that we can sort out the problem and can do so swiftly.

This is a legal and ethical minefield and would require full access to all social media accounts and the devices of all young people involved. The nature of social media accounts and the right to privacy for account holders makes it extremely difficult for the school to truly intervene without legal or police intervention.

Most social media sites have a minimum age limit of 13

This means that most students have not had access to social media before high school. Therefore, some young people will not have the knowledge and/or skills to manage online interactions. We also find that some children have been using social media from a young age and have developed some bad habits in the way they communicate online which they see as "normal." On top of all this, parents are often unaware of how young people are using the various apps and how they as parents can have some control over what their child is using and how they are using it.

At Hagley we do our best to support students in making good choices, on social media and in person, through a range of strategies.

In the Year 9 Orientation students are introduced to the Hagley College Digital Citizenship Agreement and learn about appropriate use of social media and appropriate device use. Health classes focus strongly on building and maintaining healthy relationships, and all classes work on co-operative learning skills and problem solving. The Form Tutor is there to support students to build positive relationships and develop problem solving skills, and the Year Advisors and Counsellors assist in restorative conversations and mediating more complex friendship breakdowns.

We have found that many incidents can be avoided with clear expectations and boundaries around device use at home and at school.

It is the partnership between the two which enables the healthy use of social media.

To support your child, we suggest the following:

- 1 Regularly talk with your child about who they are interacting with online and what they are posting.
- 2 Have a discussion with your child about how they are interacting online and the harm it causes to be posting, commenting, or following pages that are created to deliberately cause emotional injury and harm to another person.
- 3 Be aware and take ownership of your child's involvement in what has happened or could occur.
- 4 Limit phone use at night and in the bedroom – ensure there are clear boundaries in place around the phone and when and where it can be used.
- 5 If you believe there is a serious issue with social media take screen shots or record the entire conversation, cease all use immediately and delete the apps from the phone.
- 6 Understand that under the Harmful Digital Communications Act [HDCA] (2015) consequences for breaching the law can be serious. In New Zealand it is illegal to incite or encourage anyone to send a message to an individual for the purpose of causing harm to the individual.
- 7 If an incident occurs, connect with the caregiver of the other party(s) directly to resolve the interactions.
- 8 Read through this resource on the Netsafe website that summarises the HDCA. What is the HDCA? – Netsafe – Providing free online safety advice in New Zealand. <https://netsafe.org.nz/what-is-the-hdca/>
- 9 Read this resource: <https://www.webroot.com/nz/en/resources/tips-articles/my-child-is-a-cyberbully-what-do-i-do>.
- 10 Lay a complaint through Netsafe (this is very easy).
- 11 Contact the police if necessary.

**Te Puna Wai o Waipapa - Hagley College
wants to help support you and your child
in creating safe, educational, and fun
learning spaces both in this world and in
the cyber one.**

We are hopeful that these discussions will help to build compassion and empathy and allow your child and others to understand that cyber bullying is damaging to both the victim and the bully.

