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30 January 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing in connection to a recent posting on social media and the effect that this has had on staff, students and their families within the Kingsmeadow Community. We know from our discussions with other head teachers and senior colleagues, primary and secondary, nationwide, that social media can be an extremely dangerous platform. You will have seen many cases reported in the media.

The particular incident in this case has caused a huge amount of upset amongst staff, students and parents and is currently being investigated by the Police. I would like to thank the many members of our community that have been supportive of the school and have understood that information which is shared out of context can lead to misrepresentations and misunderstandings.

Social media has had widespread impact on the way in which we communicate and express our thoughts and opinions. There are clearly many benefits for us both as individuals and also as a community. Unfortunately we are also experiencing situations where social media has been the vehicle for inappropriate behaviour by both students and parents. We live in a society where we are proud of our right to freedom of speech and I would not wish to suggest that this should be curtailed in any way. There are occasions however, when things said in the virtual world are at best unhelpful and at worst, may constitute harassment, or intimidation. This could ultimately lead to Police involvement, as in this case.

The staff at Kingsmeadow School work tremendously hard to provide the very best education for our students and always want to work in partnership with parents and the wider community. However, we recognise that there will be occasions where, for whatever reason, parents may not agree with a particular course of action or may have specific concerns. It is entirely natural to discuss school life and express our thoughts and opinions with others face to face, on the phone or by email, where it is a reasoned exchange. Some of these conversations are now also being aired on social media and the person posting has little control over who might ultimately see it or what may be added. Sadly, some of these comments and observations could cause offence if aired in the public domain, and may in some cases be intimidating or even libelous.

This is not to suggest that teachers and headteachers are above criticism or do not welcome feedback. However, it is always best when this is constructive and reasonable and is focused on finding an acceptable solution. When difficult things need to be said, it is usually best to do so face-to-face, or at least in some form of private communication, such as an e-mail or letter.

It is unfortunate that recent events have led to this letter, but I feel it is important that I share my concerns with you about this. If you would like to discuss any issues or concerns please contact the school directly so that they can be dealt with quickly and effectively.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Volpe'. The signature is stylized with a large, looped 'D' and a cursive 'Volpe'.

D Volpe  
Headteacher