MacIntyre Academies
Quest Academy

Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians,

I'm writing to pass on some recent information and advice to you all in respect of Online Safety. We have been made aware of accounts being set up on social media platforms in the names of some of our current and previous staff members, then trying to add current and previous staff/ learners as friends.

As with any report, we have taken this extremely seriously and investigated accordingly to ensure the safety of both our learners and staff, and have been speaking to your children and young people today about it too.

Having looked into it in depth, the accounts appear to be created maliciously, with the intent of adding learners. We strongly encourage you to continue the conversation we have had with your children and young people today about online safety, advising them to be careful about who they add, and checking they are who they say they are. If it doesn't seem right, it is probably best avoided.

As a blanket rule, because of both Safeguarding and our Staff Code of Conduct no member of staff will add learners, or attempt to add learners, including those that have left Quest Academy, to their personal social media pages. The only exception to this would be the school's official social media channels, which learners, parents and carers can follow for updates and latest Quest news. It is therefore likely that any profile purporting to be a member of staff and requesting to be friends with a learner is fake and/or malicious. Even so, please report these accounts to the school at your earliest opportunity so we can still investigate accordingly as we continue to take every instance and report of potential online abuse very seriously.

Some simple steps they (and you) can take include:

- Checking the mutual friends shared between you to ensure it rings true
- Looking at descriptions, name spelling and profile picture
- Checking that you don't already have an account for that person - is this a duplicate?
- Speaking to that account holder in person to ask if they added you
- Not adding anyone that you don't know personally, and if you are DMed (Direct Messaged) by them, blocking them accordingly.
- Reporting any accounts that are harmful, suspicious or fake to the relevant platform
- Report any accounts that are linked to staff members to the school so we can investigate
- Have an open dialogue between the parent/carer and child to talk about social media, the risks and benefits and knowing who to talk to if things feel uncomfortable, risky or concerning.

If helpful, please check out this link for more information on Online Safety.

As always, thanks for your help.
Regards,

Nicola Wells