

Hertfordshire

# The Haberdashers' Aske's School for Boys



Haberdashers' Aske's is an Independent boys' school, attended by 1443 pupils aged from 4 to 18 with a total staff count of 260.

A leading independent school, with great exam results (47.2% of A levels being A\*) and their Prep school has been awarded Independent school of the year for a number of years.

Ian Phillips, Assistant Head and Director of ICT talks about his experience of working with Kat Howard, Senior Education Consultant at RM Education on the school's online safety provision

## What is your stance on online safety?

We've always felt online safety was important, but now I think it's crucial. We are 18 months into a 3 year plan, with a target for everyone on site to understand the acceptable use policy and to be aware of what we are trying to achieve, which is to help the boys' become safer and more responsible. Whether you're a cleaner or a Head teacher, all of us have a responsibility to help the boys with that and I believe we're moving forward and making good progress

## What made you decide to book online safety consultancy through RM?

We wanted to work with somebody who was going to ride alongside us for a bit, and then work out what happens next, because the school has to develop it's autonomy, you cant outsource your online safety provision.

I wanted someone that I had great confidence in and when I met Kat, she gave me the confidence that RM could provide what I require.

## What was your experience of the consultancy?

Before this stage there was a lot of planning involved. I didn't want someone to come in with a PowerPoint and just present. The good thing about Kat is that she had the PowerPoint but also has the anecdotes to go with it. Most importantly, she shared the same vision and passion that I had.

The first time Kat visited, we split her time into three parts. The first part was spent with myself and the rest of the leadership team, then we had a session with the staff and the last part was spent with parents. All of those groups were really pleased with Kat's contribution.

When we started this journey 18 months ago we had to get ahead of steam, create a new online safety policy and look at all the other policies to make sure it all dovetailed. There was a tremendous amount of work that went in over next 12 months; planning, negotiating with everyone at the school, getting Kat involved and then as a result, implementing the e-Safety policy. Everyone in the school could see there was a reason for that and how it had an impact.

## How has your approach to online safety changed?

There has definitely been a change in the boys' approach. In my lessons, I have a test that I get all the boys' to take and a big component of that is e-Safety. The nice thing is the boys' are doing better at that component and I can see the understanding is there and that there is progress.

You have areas that you can control yourself in school, working with staff on the acceptable use policy and students on the PHSE program. The component that



was lacking development for us was the relationship with parents, in a lot of cases they weren't aware of what was going on and most importantly weren't aware of their responsibility.

There were a couple of incidents in the prep school that made us aware of our responsibilities and Kat came in and did a session for both staff and parents. This was enormously well received, particularly for staff as it empowered them, as they were able to see what was going on. It has given them the confidence to be firmer and more assertive with the parents and what we feel they are entitled to do.

An analogy that I use is "Would you put your child in a playground on their own, without any supervision and just leave them" I've done the same with the students by asking them how they would feel and advising them that they shouldn't go on the internet in an untethered way, tell someone what you are doing.

#### **What's next for the school?**

We feel that our current program is working well at this moment in time. However, if something were to happen we know that it can just be adjusted.

We are in a position now, where we are very lucky because staff want to grow and we want to grow staff. We are empowering staff to provide the training to students and parents, which is great for their own professional development.

The work that is in place and what we have done with Kat, allows us to analyse where we are so that we can then be better at responding ourselves. Rather than saying we've got a problem, we don't know what to do, lets outsource it.

It is important is that we are always up to date with the latest legislation.

#### **What are your recommendations for schools in a similar position?**

Talk. I think this is what you do with any difficult situation. Even where you think you feel confident, it's critical to test that. I wouldn't do an upgrade on my Wi-Fi network without talking to someone who's job it is. Even though I know a little bit about Wi-Fi, there is going to be someone who knows more than me. It's about accepting that you need support, particularly in the beginning during implementation, you need to talk to someone. Whether

it's colleagues, whether it's professional organisations or whether it's a company like RM who clearly have the expertise.

There are some things that I don't want to be ahead of the game in, but as far as online safety and responsibility of the boys', I have to be ahead of the game in that respect, I don't have a choice. I don't want to be over reactive and waste time. We have to be proactive in this area, and be seen by the boys' to care about this and how they behave. We have very high expectations of the boys' behaviour, to be courteous, sensitive and empathetic. We don't want to put all this work in and then they go online and not be safe and responsible. We have to help them to understand that the high behavioural expectations we have, and for them to become autonomous, independent and smart extends to their behaviour online. They have to see it as a continuum, we do have separate policies, but we must make sure that the policies we have for behaviour and responsibility extend to be online.

We have to do the same with the staff, continue to have updated sessions and help them to protect themselves. Not to be paranoid but to be conscious of the changes that are happening in society.

#### **Would you recommend RM Education?**

I would recommend RM, Kat was really valuable. It could be that her value was so good to us that we may not use her as much because she has built the foundations for us to be self sufficient. We all know that as a school, that's how we are monitored, in our ability to self evaluate. Therefore, she has helped to develop our autonomy.

