

19th September 2024

Dear Parent / Carer

SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

As we start a new school year, we wanted to make sure that parents are aware of our safeguarding systems. There are a number of ways to report any concerns about a child or to seek support:

- Speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is Laura Bell
- Speak to reception staff who will give you a paper form on which you can write your concerns
- Email address on the 'Safeguarding' page of the school's website
- Contact children's social services: 0191 2772500

If a child needs support they can speak to any member of staff in school as all staff complete annual safeguarding training or they can ask to speak to the DSL or Deputy Safeguarding Leads who are: Mrs Bell, Mr Bouleau or Mr Brown (images below). They can also use the paper form or email address if they do not feel confident enough to speak to an adult themselves.

To ensure that we do everything we can to keep children safe, we look at key contextual safeguarding risks in the local area. We make staff and students aware of what the risks are to young people, give signs for them to look out for and actions they should take. We also wanted to take this opportunity to make you aware.

The key concerns that we feel are the biggest risk to our students are:

- Substance misuse and County Lines – the risk of children being exploited – particular concerns linked to students involved in vaping – see below.
- Poor attendance
- Domestic violence
- Anti – social behaviour

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SUBSTANCE MISUSE AND COUNTY LINES

County Lines is the term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. This activity happens locally as well as across the UK. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store and sell drugs and money. Offenders use coercion, intimidation, violence and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children are increasingly recruited online using social media. They can be trapped as gangs manufacture drug debts and threaten serious violence and kidnap to the children and their families if they attempt to leave the network.

We are particularly worried about students who are **vaping** as this is illegal for students under 18 and we will report to police. Some vapes now contain illegal substances such as cannabis and students can be involved in holding/dealing for older 'friends' which is a start point for involvement in county lines.

SIGNS THAT WILL CONCERN US

- New / older friends
- New / expensive possessions
- Regularly changing phones / having 'old – fashioned' phones (cheap 'burner' phones)
- Obsession with being able to access texts / messages / calls
- Changes in mood / behaviour / progress
- Self harm
- Going missing
- Vaping

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

Speak to a member of staff at school if you are worried about your child and need some support.

ATTENDANCE

SIGNS THAT WILL CONCERN US

- Repeated absence from school - if we don't see children, we don't know how they are doing and they are missing education.
- Poor punctuality – at the start of the day and to lessons.
- Sudden change in attendance pattern – for example, suddenly off every Monday
- Long periods of unexplained absence
- No contact from home

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WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

Speak to a member of staff at school if you need support getting your child into school.

WHAT WE WILL DO ABOUT ATTENDANCE CONCERNS:

- Listen to you and support you and your child.
- If attendance issues continue, this could result in a fine.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

SIGNS THAT WILL CONCERN US

- Change in behaviour
- Extreme reactions to being challenged about behaviour
- Reaction to challenge from male staff
- Absence from school
- Children who struggle to remain in lessons and need a high level of additional support from pastoral staff

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

- Let us know if there are issues at home so we can put in place support for your child and your family. We know it is very difficult sometimes to seek help in these circumstances, but we will do what we can to support you e.g. Early help referral.

ANTI – SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

SIGNS THAT WILL CONCERN US

- Reports of anti-social behaviour in the local community e.g. shoplifting, damage to local properties, verbal abuse to members of the local community, poor behaviour on the school bus
- Anti - social behaviour in school e.g. graffiti, dropping litter, discriminatory language around protected characteristics, play fighting, swearing, stealing

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

- Let us know if there are issues at home so we can put in place support
- Support and work with school staff to sanction poor behaviour to prevent it happening again e.g. period without mobile phone, set time to be in the house.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the School.

Mrs L Bell
Designated Safeguarding Lead
Senior Vice Principal

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Safeguarding Team

You have the right to feel safe and it is our job to make sure that is true.

If you feel unsafe, or you are worried about someone being upset, abused, or neglected, it is important to tell us so that we can help you.

Our Designated Safeguarding Staff



Ms Bell



Mr Bouleau



Mr Brown



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