



## The Valley Leadership Academy Executive Principal Newsflash

### Staying safe, face masks and school places

This week marks the end of our half term at the Academy. Of all the schools I have worked in, I can genuinely say I have never been prouder of the way that the staff and students have adapted to what has been huge change. The most obvious change to reflect is the 'new normal'. Existing in year group 'bubbles' has made school feel very different. We cannot fail to be reminded of the continued national and local battle we are all facing with coronavirus in every aspect of life. The Hands-Face-Space is a simple mantra and is one that has encapsulated our approach in minimising the risk related to the current situation.

With regards to staying safe please can parents note the following messages that I have been consistently sharing: Please ensure that your child has a reusable face covering wherever possible. Even after an incredible donation from The 'Rossendale Sewing Bees' we are currently handing out a large number of disposable face masks each day.



**A face covering has been an expected part of uniform all term. Please contact us if your child has a medical reason we have not already been informed of.**

Here are some links for you to buy your own face masks if you do not wish to purchase ours, [Boots](#), [the chemist](#), [Superdrug](#) and [Amazon](#). If you are more DIY inclined this [YouTube](#) link will direct you to a long list of videos showing how to make your own mask.

This image starts and ends every lesson at the Academy. Please continue to promote this at home.



## Pick Up

In addition to staying safe from COVID, please can I express my concerns over the pick up at the end of school. Quite simply, the amount of cars parked on both sides of the road is dangerous. I would ask that parents only park on the opposite side of the road or well beyond the schools gates and bus bay. I would also ask that if picking up students, parents wear face masks and maintain social distancing where possible. I appreciate this is a tight space but the last thing we all want is a traffic accident.

Please note that from today, Year 10 and 11 only will be able to access and exit school through the top gate near the four storey block. They should not use the main gate.

## Attendance Matters – Every day counts

As we have continued to note attendance is a key factor in determining academic success. Last week saw a 3% rise in attendance which is incredible. We know that a stomach bug and cold have been major factors for some students' absences. Hopefully the end of this bout of illness will see continued excellence. This week we are aiming for 94%. Any tutor group over 94% will be entered into a prize draw this Friday for a special October reward.

You never know the winners may even choose to share some of the winnings at home!!!

## Appearance Matters

I have consistently highlighted my expectations on uniform this half-term. I would like to highlight to parents that these will be enforced stringently after half-term.

- False Eye lashes CANNOT be worn. ALL students must ensure that this has been corrected for after half-term.
- No Make-Up.
- ONE pair of plain studs. ALL other and additional piercings must be removed before entry.
- NO TRAINERS.
- PE kit should only be worn on PE days,

There will be a uniform check on entry to the Academy every day next half-term. Students will be expected to correct the above immediately. If they do not they will receive learning separate from all other students until corrected. Many parents are reporting that students have the full uniform but are choosing not to wear it or are just pushing their luck a little. Please contact us if uniform is an issue, we will be as understanding as possible. It is impossible for us to validate a student's claim of 'my mum is getting them at the weekend'.

## Well-Being week

Last week we had a week focussed on well-being in the Academy. It was fantastic to see students writing positive messages to each other, taking part in yoga, discussing how to stay healthy. One of the sessions we ran looked at sleep deprivation. This is a major factor in students being successful at school. Turning up tired significantly limits the ability to concentrate. Next half-term we will be running sessions for parents on supporting study at home. One of the sessions will specifically be focussed on creating routines that support positive sleep patterns. The 'Mindful Monday' sessions will be posted on the Academy website and Facebook at the start of next half-term.

## The Valley in Bloom

As part of Well-being week, we planted 450 daffodils this week. That is one daffodil for each student. We hope that in March as we enter Spring, we will see a field of daffodils symbolise a period of hope and new growth. The daffodil planting is the first of an ambition of mine to really enhance our school landscaping. I am really hopeful of creating a TVLA in bloom project that spreads throughout the year. I would ask that any parents or grandparents who may be happy to be involved or support us in anyway, make contact with us at The Academy. As many keen gardeners will know planning for next summer starts now.

## Year 11

Attendance for Period 6 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday was positive this week. Well done to all the students who turned up. There are only 19 school weeks left, just 115 days in school, until the first GCSE exam. Where is the time going? To this end I would point out to year 11 parents the following:

- There will be a series of Half-term sessions (online and in-school) that will be sent to you and posted on the Website and Facebook by Friday this week.
- All year 11 students will automatically be expected to attend period 6 after school next half-term. We will be putting on transport each day for those students who would normally catch the bus.
- We will be posting a year 11 checklist each week for parents. We hope this provides you with an easy reference point to 'what's on' and where you can support.
- All students have received their new log-on and passwords for TEAMS. This is the place where students will access work from teachers when away from the Academy.
- We have issued students with a laptop for the duration of their studies.

A reminder that Mocks are scheduled to begin on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November.

## Virtual Open Days

All college open days this year will be delivered virtually. It is important that Year 11 students book onto these events in order to make an informed choice about their Post 16 options. Each Friday in assembly we will be running a virtual Q and A with the colleges.

## SMUG AWARD WINNERS

**This week MUG of sweets S'MUG' award goes to...**

Jack Jones-Hassan

## Safeguarding

Two weeks ago we introduced to you the national online safety resource, a kind of one stop shop if you like for all the information and parent guides you might need for those things that maybe you feel you should know about, but maybe you're a little too embarrassed to admit that really you have no idea of the difference between what a TikTok is or a YouTube.

To go straight to the webpage all you need to do is click on this link

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/> and it will lead you to a world of answers. However, it does come

with a health warning; a lot of what our children are able to access is quite unsavoury. Smart phones, social media has opened Pandora's box to all things in the world and every person in the world who uses the vast array of social media, 'fun' apps and online games.

Unfortunately, not everyone who uses the internet or social media is a nice person and lots can be solely there to exploit children, even your child. Having an awareness and knowledge about what your child is doing, who they are interacting with is incredibly important. This week we have included a guide about online grooming.

Remember, you are the parent and you are in charge. Once your child is online, using social media sites or apps they are open to the entire world.

## Important dates

The Academy will close for the Half Term Holiday on **Friday 23rd October**. We re-open again on **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November**

Please follow us on social media



@ValleyLAcademy

At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit [www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com) for further guides, hints and tips for adults.



**Online Grooming** is when someone befriends and builds an emotional relationship with a child and communicates with them through the internet with the intent to commit a sexual offence. This type of victimisation can take place across any platform; from social media and messaging apps to online gaming and live streaming. Often it involves young people being tricked, forced or pressured into doing something they wouldn't normally do (coercion) and often the groomer's goal is to meet the victim in a controlled setting to sexually or physically abuse them. In some cases children may be abducted or have long-lasting psychological damage.



# What parents need to know about ONLINE GROOMING

### CHILDREN ARE MOST VULNERABLE

Unsurprisingly children are often most at risk as they are easy to target and unlikely to question the person who is engaging in conversation with them. Groomers will use psychological tricks and methods to try and isolate them from their families and friends and will often choose to target more vulnerable children who may be easier to manipulate. Predators will stalk apps and websites that are popular with young people and will use a 'scattergun' approach to find victims, contacting hundreds online to increase their chances of success.

### LIVE STREAMING CONCERNS

Predators may use live video to target children in real-time using tricks, dares or built-in gifts to manipulate them. Channels, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, all have live streaming capabilities, but there are many apps which children can use to live stream, including Omegle, Live.me, BIGO Live, YouNow and many more.

### ANYONE CAN BE A PREDATOR

The internet has made the ability to interact with strangers online easy. Many sites and apps are reliant on individual users entering their own information when signing up. However individuals can remain anonymous if they choose to enter inaccurate information and many online predator cases are due to groomers using impersonation techniques. However, often the greater threat comes from adults who 'hide in plain sight', choosing to befriend young children without hiding their real identity.

### CAN BE DIFFICULT TO DETECT

Unfortunately, most children find the grooming process (before any meeting) an enjoyable one as the predator will compliment, encourage and flatter them to gain their trust, friendship and curiosity – a wolf in sheep's clothing scenario. This often means children fail to disclose or report what is happening. If the groomer is also previously known to the child, their family and their friends, then this can make detection even harder.

### FROM OPEN TO CLOSED MESSAGING

Online predators may contact their victims using any number of ways including social media, forums, chat rooms, gaming communities or live streaming apps. Sometimes there is little need to develop a 'friendship' /rapport stage, as the victim has already shared personal information online and is communicating openly with others. Children may also be prepared to add other online users they don't know so well to gain 'online credibility' through increasing their friends list. Predators will often seize this opportunity to slowly build a relationship and then move their conversation with the child to a more secure and private area, such as through direct messaging.

### EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS

Online predators will use emotive language and aim to form close, trusted bonds with their victims through showering them with compliments and making them feel good about themselves. Often victims will refer to them as their 'boyfriends' or 'girlfriends' and it can be difficult to convince some young people that they have been groomed, often leading to lasting psychological effects.

## National Online Safety Safety Tips for Parents & Carers

#WakeUpWednesday

### IT'S GOOD TO TALK

It's unlikely that you can stop your child using the internet, nor can you constantly monitor their online activities, but you can talk to your child on a regular basis about what they do online. By talking openly with them about online relationships, they can quickly ascertain the kind of behaviour which is appropriate or inappropriate. Ask them whether they have any online friends or if they play online games with people they haven't met. This could then open up conversations about the subject of grooming.

### CHECK PRIVACY SETTINGS

In order to give your child a safer online experience, it is important to check privacy settings or parental controls on the networks, devices, apps, and websites they use. Disable location sharing if you can. If you use location-sharing apps to check where your child is, remember that these could always be used by strangers to follow your child without their knowledge. Ensure that you check options so that location information is never shared with anyone except those they have permission to share with.

### MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA & LIVE-STREAMING USE

It's important to be aware of what your child is sharing on social media and with whom. Create your own profile and become 'friends' with them or follow them so that you can monitor their activity. Similarly, always check on them if they are live streaming and implement privacy controls. Choose a generic screen name and profile picture that hides their identity. You may also feel more comfortable being present each time they live stream.

### STICK TO 'TRUE FRIENDS'

Make it clear to your child that they should not accept friend requests from people they don't know and to verify friend requests with people who they do know. Encourage them to only interact and engage with 'true friends' i.e. those friends who don't ask personal questions such as close family and friends. Remind them to never agree to chat privately with a stranger or someone they don't really know and to never divulge personal information, such as mobile phone numbers, addresses, passwords or the name of their school.

### DISCUSS HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Talk to your child about what a healthy relationship looks like and how to detect someone who might not be who they claim to be. Explain that groomers will pay your child compliments and engage in conversations about personal information, such as hobbies and relationships. They may admire how well they play an online game or how they look in a photo. Groomers will also try and isolate a child from people close to them, such as parents and friends. In order to make their relationship feel special and unique.

### BE SUPPORTIVE

Show your child that you will support them and make sure they understand they can come to you with any concerns they may have. They need to know they can talk to you if someone does something they are uncomfortable with, whether that is inappropriate comments, images, requests or sexual comments.

### Meet our expert

Jonathan Taylor is an online safety expert and former covert internet investigator for the Metropolitan Police. He is a specialist in online grooming and exploitation and has worked extensively with both UK and international schools in delivering training and guidance around the latest online dangers, social media apps and platforms.

### LOOK OUT FOR WARNING SIGNS

Child safety experts have identified key grooming patterns and advise parents to look out for:

- Secretive online behaviour.
- Late night internet or smartphone usage.
- Meeting new friends in unusual places.
- Becoming clingy, develop sleeping or eating problems or even bedwetting.
- Lack of interest in extra-curricular activities.
- Having new items, such as clothes or phones, unexplainably.
- Seem withdrawn, anxious, depressed or aggressive.
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends.



Some examples of footwear the Academy deems at trainers and therefore not acceptable as school shoes.



At the start of term, I wrote to parents noting that as the Academy seemed to have allowed Black Air Force One trainers last year, I would be allowing a window through to half-term of these as acceptable footwear. As we approach half-term, please contact the Academy if parents are unable to provide footwear from the top list next half-term.