

LANCASTER ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Suicide Prevention and Sexual Harassment

Dear LRGS Parents and Carers,

At the end of the half term I'm writing to all parents with an update of some of the more complex pastoral themes we've been working on recently. As always, I welcome your thoughts, ideas and concerns with regards to any aspect of pastoral care with the hope that we can continue to improve the experiences of all pupils at LRGS.

Suicide Prevention

It is a sad reality that suicide amongst young people is a very real concern for parents, friendship groups and schools. We empathise with the LRGS families who have been touched by these concerns in some way. While we will never be able to remove the risk to young people, the school is committed to becoming a suicide-safer school. To this end we have been working closely with Papyrus <https://www.papyrus-uk.org> a UK charity working to prevent young suicide. The Middle School's recent Hopewalk raised money for and awareness of this important charity. All staff at school recently benefited from their SP-ARK suicide awareness training, with 30 of our pastoral team completing their SP-EAK Suicide Prevention – Explore, Ask, Keep-Safe programme. I'm also very pleased that we now have three ASIST <https://www.livingworks.net/asist> trained members of staff, with myself, Di Gibbon (Pastoral Support) and Sara Bridson (School Counsellor) completing this internationally recognised approach to suicide intervention.

I'm pleased that we now have 35 mental health first aiders in school, and we will continue to build this number of staff comfortable and capable of supporting pupils showing acute mental health concerns. Similarly, some of the pastoral team have just completed further self-harm and suicidal thoughts workshops in order to establish self-harm toolkits in the school.

The school's Suicide Prevention Policy is due for governor review in December, and you are invited to comment on the policy and also share your views of the school's approach to this issue. The full policy can be found here: <https://www.lrgs.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=2036&type=pdf> and you are invited to submit your comments using this form: <https://forms.office.com/r/M6wyYtZVfX>

Sexual Harassment

We are all aware that sexual violence and harassment seems to be so prevalent in this day and age. Whether this be footballers in the news accused of rape, polling showing high numbers of women in the UK who've experienced unwelcome touching or groping in public, or the violent misogyny prompted on TikTok by influencers, we see the complex and concerning world our young people are growing up in.

While having a co-ed sixth form, we are acutely aware that the school is a predominantly male environment, so there is a clear responsibility on the LRGS community to tackle the attitudes around misogyny and sexual harassment and violence, and make a difference in the lives of our young people.

As parents I would ask you to reflect on a recent Ofcom report which found that “a third of children aged between 8 and 17 with a social media profile have an adult user age after signing up with a false date of birth” meaning they have access to potentially harmful content. We know the uncomfortable truth that many young people have seen pornographic content online, the harmful expectations this content promotes and the confusing picture of consent it portrays. You may be interested in Clinical Psychologist Dr. Elly Hanson’s thoughts on how parents can protect their children from porn and build their resilience against it:
<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/elly-hanson-online-pornography-blog>

In school we continue to promote positive messages about healthy relationships, being kind, and not being a bystander. We have also been clearer in our messaging around sexual harassment with the pupils, adapting our language to suit their ages. With the younger years we have been reminding them of the ‘underpants rule’ which they will have learnt at primary school, with a clear ‘keep your hands and your comments to yourself’ mantra. From Year 9 up we have been increasingly unambiguous about referring to the definitions of sexual violence and sexual harassment. We’ve also been running a series of pupil voice forums on this theme in order to hear about the issues we need to address.

We continue to review and improve our preventive education programme and as an example I’m pleased that we have commissioned The Birchall Trust to introduce their Protective Behaviours Programme into Year 9.

Again, the school’s Pupil Relationships, Sexual Violence, and Sexual Harassment Between Children Policy is due for governor review in December, and you are invited to comment on the policy and also share your views of the school’s approach to this issue. The full policy can be found here:
<https://www.lrgs.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=2055&type=pdf>

The policy has already undergone some robust scrutiny in pupil forums who have made their views on its shortcomings very clear! This in itself was an encouraging endorsement that the pupils want to make further progress in this area. Parents are again invited to submit your comments using this form:
<https://forms.office.com/r/M6wyYtZVfX>

As always, I would be very happy for you to contact me at school if you’d like a more in-depth conversation about any pastoral topic.

Wishing you a pleasant half term.

James

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