

14<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

## **SAFEGUARDING AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

I thought I would write to you regarding the importance of our students' safety and mental health. Young people's mental health is something we must all take seriously. Suicide is the leading cause of death in young people in the UK, and therefore promoting mental health in our Academy isn't just desirable, it's essential. Statistics reveal that:

- 75% of mental illnesses start before a child reaches their 18th birthday.
- 50% of mental health problems in adult life start before the age of 15. 75% of young people with a mental health problem aren't receiving treatment.
- 51% of young people feel embarrassed about mental illness.

There are a number of factors that can contribute to poor mental health such as exam pressure, growing social media influence and of course the impact of COVID-19.

## **ANONYMOUS REPORTING**

As highlighted above at Budmouth Academy we believe that safeguarding our students is of the utmost importance and that the ability to report concerns to an appropriate adult is vital in ensuring everyone remains safe. Evidence from nationwide studies and recent media reporting suggests that sexual harassment and online bullying is under-reported. At Budmouth we are determined to do something about this. We have therefore decided to introduce a new system that will encourage students to report concerns anonymously so that we can support them at school.

'Whisper' is an on-line and open reporting route that can address concerns and issues that affect the mental-health, safety and well-being of children, young people and staff. This can be accessed by clicking on the link below. This will also be displayed on the Academy website (<https://swgfl.org.uk/whisper/baw1/>) Alternatively students can text BAW1 followed by their message to 07860 021323.

There is then the choice whether to supply contact details, or to share these concerns anonymously. The personal details are not shared or stored as part of the process, unless someone chooses to include them, this also includes the mobile phone number, if reporting issues by SMS.

## **WHAT CAN BE REPORTED?**

Sharing things that upset someone is not always an easy thing to do. Whisper is designed to act as another way that students can tell a responsible adult at the Academy about any issues that they might be having. Sometimes they might find it easier than a face to face meeting.

This might include:

- Someone being bullied (the reporter or someone else).
- Something happening online that they don't feel comfortable with and might need some advice on.
- If somebody at the Academy is at risk.
- If somebody has a problem like harassment or prejudice they wish to discuss.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER A CONCERN IS REPORTED?**

We will endeavour to read any concerns raised within 24 hours. The Academy has a duty of care to deal with any issues that involve the safety or well-being of students or pupils, so you can expect this to be acted upon. The school will then investigate the issue further using the information you have provided.

Not all issues that are reported can be resolved. But reporting can raise awareness for school staff and ensure that everyone's voice is able to be heard. Your child will receive information regarding Whisper in school assemblies next week, and the system is already live.

## **PUNCTUALITY**

To further improve our safeguarding practice and reduce the number of students who are missing lessons, a new system will be trialled from Monday 3rd July for the remainder of the school term. Students will have a transition period of 4 minutes between lessons. If students are not in lessons by this point they will be classed as truants and be placed in an Academy Based Exclusion. Students will still have time to access toilets between lessons and if they need to access support such as the Student Support Centre then this will be taken into consideration. Recent studies have shown that students who are late to lessons are 3 times less likely to retain the information than their peers. Furthermore, there is the detrimental impact on other learners due to the disruption of late arrivals.

## **SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

We understand the importance of our students' mental health and I would like to emphasise the support systems that are available in school:

- Tutor- Your child will meet with their tutor every morning. Please do ask them to share any concerns with him or her in the first instance.
- PSL- Each school has its own Pastoral Support Leader. This is a full-time member of staff who is available to provide support for students.
- Anti-Bullying Ambassadors - This is a trained group of students who can provide a supportive ear for younger students who are struggling. Students can ask their tutor for details.
- Emotional Literacy Support (ELSA) for all years including Sixth Form.
- Student Support Centre - Our very own Inclusion Centre provides a range of different support mechanisms for students and our very own school support dog! Please do contact your Head of School if you feel your child would benefit from this support.
- School Counsellor - We have a limited number of students who receive support from our school counsellor.
- Early Help Support - We have two Dorset Council early help workers who are in school on a Friday to provide support for external issues. Please contact your child's Head of School for details.
- Kooth - An online space where students can find anonymous online support for a range of issues.

Every student can experience difficulties during their school life. We do recognise this. The key message that we are highlighting is that there is support available and that fundamentally we feel it is beneficial for our students to seek this support and never feel embarrassed by any concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Phil Midworth  
Vice Principal