

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been fantastic to see so many of you in school this week at our Parent Teacher Conferences: it is always a great reminder of how lucky we are to have parents so invested in their children's education. I cannot stress the importance of these meetings, especially this first session, when we are still getting to know your child and they are still settling into a new year group.

However, as important as these meetings are, I must stress again, that you can arrange a meeting at any point during the year and so please do not wait until these evenings, if there is something you wish to discuss. Afternoons are always best as the teachers need to supervise the children in the morning, but an afterschool meeting can be arranged through the office.

**Safeguarding in Schools** A great challenge for any school is parent perception. All of you have spent a significant part of your life in education and therefore, bring a clear idea of what our role is and what happens behind our doors each day. In reality, the role of a school, the teacher and the headteacher, has changed immeasurably and no more so, than in the area of safeguarding.

After the tragic incidents of Soham in 2002, the law was changed to ensure this could never happen again through making the school and in particular, the headteacher, legally responsible for ensuring the safety of your child in a number of ways. Many of these fall outside the school day and therefore, can come as a surprise to families who have no experience of safeguarding. Moreover, the more traditional idea of social services is really only a very small part of this, with the vast majority of support provided by the school itself, including:

- ◆ **Discussing home life**—family life is not always easy and things go wrong: children injure themselves, parents argue, siblings fight. As we spend so much time with your children each day, inevitably these things are noticed or brought up in conversation and then have a legal duty to follow-up with your family just to check that these are just 'bad days' or whether this is something you may need our help with and helping to signpost organisations that can help.
- ◆ **Checking on attendance**—again, it is my legal responsibility for me to know where our pupils are during a school day. Thankfully, most parents phone to inform us of absence; however, when parents forget, we must keep trying any contacts that we have until we know where they are. Moreover, if we cannot make contact over a couple of days, we have to complete a home visit and even speak with neighbours, before contacting the authorities. This is why we are so grateful that parents inform the school of holidays, even when knowing that we are highly unlikely to authorise these.
- ◆ **Welcoming with closed doors**—as noted earlier, we really strive for your involvement in our school and your child's education; however, we have to be incredibly strict about who has access to our building. Anybody who enters during the school day has to have DBS checks, undergo safeguarding training and often supply references, even as a volunteer or a member of the PTA. This is why we man the school gates and at times, can probably appear like we are trying to kick parents out. Genuinely, this is just about keeping those inside safe and we are constantly trying to look for ways to balance these two competing priorities.
- ◆ **Relationships and Sex Education**—our curriculum covers quite grown up ideas. In part, this is to help the pupils understand what is safe and appropriate. Probably the best example of this is the NSPCC Pantosaurus song, which from Reception, teaches our pupils that there are parts of their body that are private. We appreciate that this is a sensitive topic which is why we run an awareness session each year to gain your feedback, please attend if you can.
- ◆ **IT Safety**—Our primary aim is to teach the children how to be safe online and we would always ask you to involve the school when this has not been the case. However, the school also has a duty to ensure pupils use our IT systems safely which involves the filtering and monitoring structures that we have on the pupil accounts. More information will be sent around this next week, when we ask that you sign a IT Code of Conduct on behalf of your child.

In addition to these elements, there are many more activities that come under the safeguarding umbrella and so as the Designated Safeguarding Lead in school, it probably accounts for around a quarter of my role each week although this can vary hugely. This is why we are really lucky to have a safeguarding team, each with a particular role: Mrs Graham focuses on attendance and adult mental health; Mrs Saddleton focuses on vulnerable pupils and is a domestic abuse champion; Miss Broughton leads on early family support and Young Carers and Miss Buschmann coordinates the mental health structures for our pupils.

The school website has a safeguarding section with more information about the help we can provide and the agencies that we work with. Alternatively, we are always available to discuss any issues that you are having. All of these discussions are fully confidential and only shared with other staff with permission or for matters of safety.

**PTA** We currently have an outstanding 26 registered members of the PTA, which is our biggest amount by far. We will be meeting on November 8th at 7pm for our annual 'Safe Wrapping Night' - where presents are wrapped for the Christmas Fair, whilst I deliver annual safeguarding training. The PTA is a great way to meet other parents of the school and makes a tremendous impact to our wider offer to the children and so please feel free to join us if you are free.

