



Walderslade Girls' School

Specialist College for the Arts

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Headteacher

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Dear Parents & Carers

Re: Safety over the Summer and Headteacher's Farewell

As we begin the long summer holidays from school I write to you with regard to ensuring our children stay as safe as possible during the break. As well as all the usual sun safety precautions we teach the girls about, protecting their skin from the strong rays in hot weather and keeping hydrated, we are also concerned about a number of other safety and well being factors affecting young people today and placing them at risk.

During summer afternoons and evenings many young people tend to gather in groups around parks and recreation grounds, by rivers and shopping centres, fairgrounds or just generally out and about around the area. It is here that girls need to be wary of being befriended by youths they do not know who may be seeking to recruit them into gangs. The police and schools are very concerned about the growing gang activity in the area and innocent children and teenagers are thought to be prime targets for being groomed into these groups, usually for the purpose of anti-social and criminal activity. I advise all parents to keep close contact with their children if they are out and about, to find out who they are with and to ensure they return home at agreed reasonable times if allowed out independently with friends.

The vast majority of children and teenagers now possess a mobile phone and it is always advisable to talk to your daughter about their behaviour online, the websites they use, the kinds of people they connect with on social media and the language and pictures they post on messages. Sometimes children forget that they are leaving a digital footprint and once they have posted something it can never actually disappear. This year at school we have dealt with a significant increase in cases of inappropriate online behaviour. Parents and carers need to be aware of what their children are doing and saying and posting online and who they are involved with, for their own safety.

We have also recently been alerted to another very concerning form of grooming that is targeting children and teenagers who have their own bank accounts. Fraudsters are seeking to launder money using these accounts and will try to recruit young people with a promise of earning 'free' money by giving over their debit card, account number and PIN. Significant sums of money are then deposited in and taken out of the accounts as these criminals seek to move illegally gained money around undetected. Sadly we have heard of several cases around Medway schools where young people have unknowingly got involved in these schemes, giving over their bank details and then, in the eyes of the law, they too have committed an offence of money laundering and are subject to prosecution. Please talk to your daughter about keeping their bank details secure, never giving them to anyone and never sharing their PIN or passwords no matter what they are told.



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We are living in unprecedented times and the work of safeguarding teams in schools is growing every year as we seek to protect our children from what is now a vast range of dangers, both in person and online.

Now the time has come for me to say a final farewell to WGS. I have been overwhelmed with the generosity and kindness of so many girls and their parents who have sent me gifts and written beautiful cards and messages, all of which I shall keep and treasure. I have very much enjoyed my five years as Headteacher at Walderslade Girls' School and will be sad to say goodbye to the school when my post finishes in August. It is such a special place and the girls are wonderful to work with. They are warm and caring, funny and feisty in equal measures! Some need to work much harder; some need to curtail their behaviour but most need to simply carry on being the lovely spirits that they are. I will miss them more than they know.

I wish all our girls and families a safe and happy summer break.

With kindest regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L McGowan', written in a cursive style.

Mrs L McGowan
Headteacher