



THE HOLMEWOOD SCHOOL



**National
Autistic
Society**

**Accredited
Advanced
2020**



Newsletter

Friday 21 May 2021

Dear Families,

We've had another great week at The Holmewood School with lots of time spent in the outdoors... as well as some serious final study for exams in the upper school!

Exams (although they are still rather different this year) can be a very stressful experience for any young person, and our students have the same struggles. We are mindful of these extra pressures on our older students right now and are trying to balance their needs to help them ease through. If your child is having particular difficulty, please remember to speak to Ms B Young, Ms T Young or Ms Lyons at the upper school.

In the lower school, we've witnessed the development of new relationships and bonds in our primary classes where students are learning about the interests of others so that they can engage in conversation and play together more easily. This has been a joy!

Beyond Holmewood I am sadly writing to you once again about hatred in our city. As fighting continues between Palestine and Israel, peaceful protests in London were turned into attacks on our Jewish friends and neighbours with homes and cars in North London being broken into and defaced, and people being verbally and physically assaulted on the streets. Golders Green, St John's Wood and Finchley have all been affected with particular aggression.

unacceptable and must be stood up to. There is no justification to inciting hatred towards any community. Right now, people we know and love are scared and they need our support. Children in our school are also suffering and need to know they are safe.

Some of us will find out information from the news; from social media; from conversations with friends, colleagues or peers; some may overhear bits of conversations; and some may feel and witness the very real distress of these incidents in those we know and love. Whatever the situation, without guidance, validation and support, people can be left to navigate their feelings alone. Language and posts that we and our children see on social media is intimidating, hateful and racist and we need to look out for each other.

We don't want anyone to feel alone through this, so whilst we leave the police and politicians to find and stop this hate and violence, I want to reassure you that we are all together in thinking about a way forward that creates a better future.

For parents

1. We remain a community that is inclusive and supportive of all people. We will not tolerate discrimination of any kind. All members of the SLT are available to listen to your worries as needed.
2. We urge you to stay knowledgeable about what is happening and research history to understand the current situation in both Israel and Palestine. Take time to understand the hurt that each country feels.
3. Practically, you may wish to engage in exercises such as deep breathing, yoga and mindfulness before tackling your reading or any discussions with others so that you're better prepared to manage your feelings.
4. If you've been in North London these last few days and subject to the abuse personally, the trauma will be unimaginable. However, remember that 'vicarious trauma' through screens is real too and the stress of watching traumatic events on TV or phones lingers within our bodies and minds. Make sure to channel this extra energy into something positive and relaxing before engaging with students and your own children in particular. This does not mean letting go of the anger or anxiety, it just means organising it better so that you can think and act more clearly.
5. Beware of overconsumption and be cautious with TV and media. Watch what you need in order to stay informed but then turn it off and do something that makes you feel connected to loved ones.
6. If you are joining any protests, please make sure they are official, peaceful and safe. Follow official guidance, stay protected and stay safe.
7. Please be assured that we are acutely aware that the location of our Lower School is opposite the synagogue. We have plans in place to keep children safe should any violence occur in our vicinity.
8. Be an ally. Talk less and listen more.
9. For more support visit some of the following:
 - [The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#) appears to have good teaching resources (but please be particularly sensitive, establish group rules, and be confident

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- [Talking to Children about Hate Crimes and Anti-Semitism](#) gives more ideas that build on the suggestions below
- [Staying safe from terrorism](#) - advice from the police
- [How to Protest Safely](#)

For your children (at Holmewood and beyond)

1. We must continue to advocate for our children and teach them about the values of kindness, equality and compassion.
2. Let the child's age and level of development guide you.
3. Remember that children may pick up on fear, urgency, or anger in people's voices and behaviours so make sure you are ready to engage in these difficult conversations.
4. Ensure stories you read children reflect our community well and include all faiths, all cultures.
5. If younger children ask you questions about difference, aim to celebrate and enjoy these differences.
6. If you hear or can sense that children have been exposed to information about recent distressing events, ask them what they know and what they've seen. Ask them how they are feeling about it and validate those feelings. Let them know what we are doing to keep them safe and to challenge racism and violence.
7. Try to limit the exposure that they have to disturbing information in the media. This is particularly important for younger children or those who are still developmentally young. With older children, we do not want to shield them entirely, and need to engage with them in conversations about hate and racism, using these events as a catalyst. While it is upsetting to watch recordings of recent events, we need to sit with that discomfort and teach our children how to channel that energy to positively break down barriers and support our community.
8. Help children find out facts about opposing countries and communities such as through kids.britannica.com/Palestine or [Guide: Why are Israel and the Palestinians fighting over Gaza? - CBBC Newsround](#)
9. Provide a controlled space to understand what is going on. This will help children navigate distressing emotions, helplessness and fear.
10. Older children may be involved in online activism. For teens, remember that this can be a coping mechanism and may give comfort when they feel pretty helpless. You may want to ask them what they think about what they have seen or read, and what about it was upsetting or inspiring
11. For younger children use questions such as:
 - How do you think those people were feeling?
 - Do you know why they were angry?
 - What do you do when you feel like something is unfair?

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Annual Questionnaire

Dear families,

Please take a few moments to answer our annual questionnaire as we prepare our priorities for next academic year. It was sent to you as a Google Form by email this week.

We would appreciate your responses by Monday 14th June 2021.

Wishing you all peace and love,

Ms Camilleri

Executive Head Teacher

Dates For Your Diary

- **Mon 31st May to Fri 4th June** - Half term holiday
- **Mon 7th June** - Inset day
- **Tues 8th June** - Summer term (2nd half) starts
- **Wed 14th July** - End of term
- **Thurs 15th July** - Inset day

Running To The Social World

Hello everyone, I say as I awkwardly extend my elbow and let off a nervous laugh.

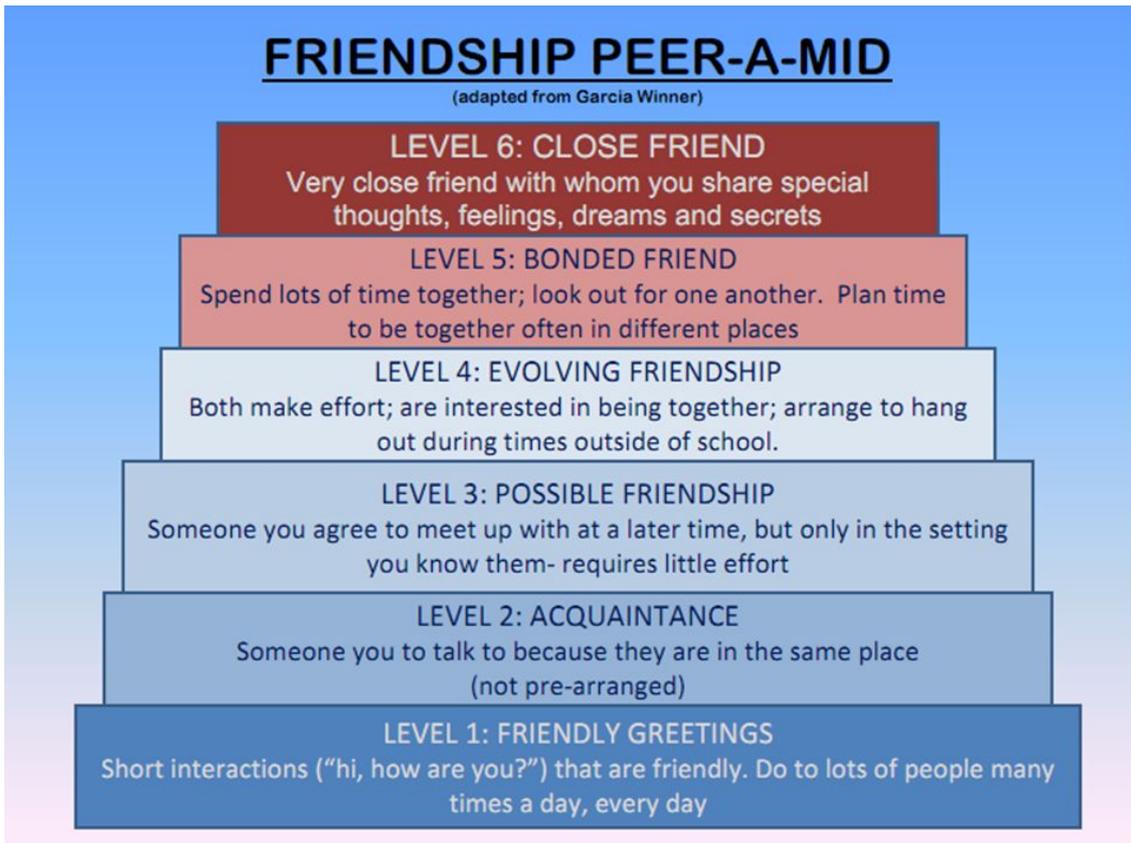
I watch the 'A Late Show with Stephen Colbert' pretty religiously. This week he included a segment that explored 're-entry anxiety'. He explained that we have become accustomed to a Covid-era form of social etiquette. Now that restrictions are easing, there are new expectations around social etiquette and no one knows how to navigate them. Apparently an expert in the Wall Street Journal complained that 'there aren't any etiquette manuals I can reference in times like these'.

Then it segued to a funny 'how to' video about social etiquette at a party (post-Covid) and it really cut a little too close to the bone.

The periods of isolation we have experienced over the past year have had an impact on us all. Like in the segment on Colbert, many of us will be feeling anxious about our social interactions.

basically a manual for supporting young people with social etiquette. It reminded me how important this work is generally, but especially in our current context.

When you consider friendships as clearly defined in the pyramid below, we have missed many opportunities to socialise informally with the level one, two and three people in our lives due to the pandemic. We've missed in person greetings and friendly hellos in our day to day and we have missed little 'not pre-arranged' conversations with the people who are in the 'same place' as us. We have also had to communicate with those we do see in person from behind a mask.



Studies suggest that these small interactions have a large impact on our happiness. However, perhaps more impactful is the lack of opportunities to form and foster friendships at level four and above. This is due to the fact that close, bonded and evolving friendships require the level one to three relationships to develop first.

Even our existing friendships suffer when spending time together and arranging to hang out isn't possible, or it's only possible in the clunky world of Zoom. It's not surprising that we're feeling a little lonely and anxious as a result. It's reassuring to know that we are not alone in these feelings. Indeed famous comedians are already satirising the issue.

Of course we must acknowledge that making and keeping friends may be particularly difficult for those who already have social interaction deficits. Over the next term we'll be focusing on the explicit teaching of forming and maintaining friendship to support our young people to re-engage with the world.

A good plan to start is always a friendly hello. I promise I am smiling from behind the

Ms Young

Head of Upper school

The Lego Harrier Jump Jet

After finishing my model of the F35B, I wanted to make the only other vertical take off and landing or VTOL jet called the Harrier.

There are multiple versions of this plane but I wanted to recreate the AV8B which is distinguishable by two overhanging plates over the front thrusters.

I included several working parts such as ailerons, folding front, back and side landing gears, an opening cockpit and thrusters that can swivel down in tandem.

I used a lego chain piece to sync the rotation of the thrusters. The real Harrier uses motorcycle chains to create that effect. I have also included some of the smaller details too and will possibly add even more.



This plane did not take nearly as long as the F35. It took about three weeks to complete. I have always found VTOL planes intriguing and wanted to make all of these VTOL planes out of lego.

In the future I hope to have a career in the airforce and go into engineering and design spacecrafts.

Joshua L

Bakerloo Student



It has been a very busy half term in class and we have enjoyed several exciting and interesting activities.

I would first like to thank Ms D'Silva for inviting the class to Forest school at the Muswell Hill site last Friday. The students had a wonderful time and it was lovely to see so many positive interactions as a result of the session. The students were really excited to spend another afternoon at the site where they will be completing their education in the near future.

I have also been very impressed with the progress the class has made in travel training this half term. I have been seeing pictures of trips to destinations including Mill Hill East, Kentish town and Camden town. A class treat is planned for the final session with the suggestion of ice cream in Camden Lock made by Natty.

The class were also lucky enough to attend a special breakfast to mark the start of Mental Health Awareness Week. The pictures have made me very jealous of being at the Upper School on that particular day. Special mentions for Isaac and Huxley for giving a lovely assembly to the class on mental health, Jonathan, Ekin and Jack for a beautifully presented TED talk, Felix for becoming the animal care intern for the Lower School and Natty for a very positive last few weeks. Well done to everyone in Victoria. Here's to a successful second half of the summer term.

Have a great weekend everyone!

Mr Gibbs

Victoria Class Teacher



This term has flown by and there is just one more week to go until the holidays.

Our students are all so busy with exams at the moment and have coped with changes really well. We hope that once their exams are all finished we will be able to plan some fun activities to do with them. As this year has been a challenging one we really want to make sure that our students have the best last few weeks at Holmewood before commencing the next part of their journey.

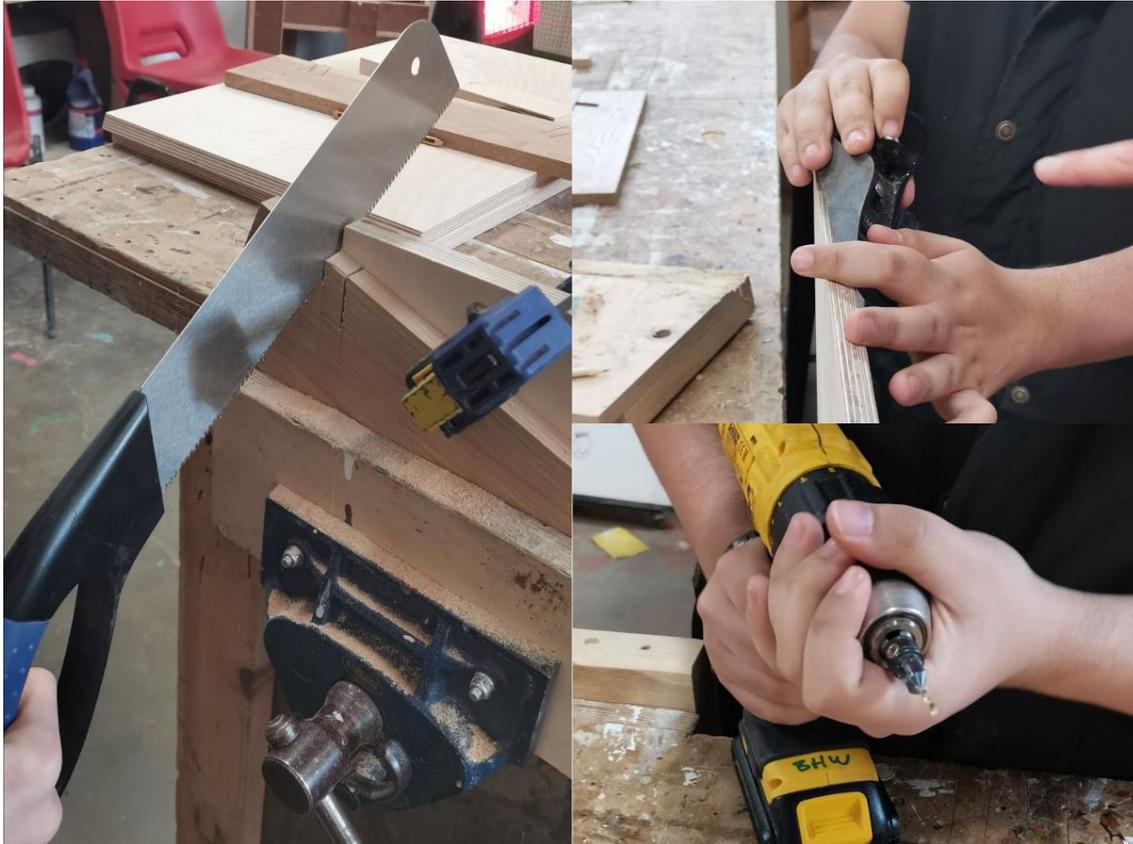
College News

Our A Level students, Max and Nicky, have been completing exams and coursework which will be going towards their final grades. They have both worked really hard and are set to achieve great grades.

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Thanks to Ms Aka for helping to coordinate between the college and Holmewood to ensure our students had the necessary arrangements in place.

A few of our students have recently been attending a woodwork workshop at the Blackhorse Workshop in Walthamstow with the initial project of building a table with storage for magazines. This project is now complete so students will have opportunities to plan their own projects or become more accustomed to working with a range of tools in the workshop.



Students with work experience are excelling at their placements. They are showing dedication, professionalism and are really impressing staff with their work ethic.

One of our students is teaching a Key Stage 4 student an advanced computing course. He works with him once a week and both students seem to be getting a lot from it.

Have a great weekend,

DLR Team

Guided Imagery For Managing Exam Stress



Exams or any form of tests can be a stressful experience. The buildup of feelings of anxiety can cause many physiological and psychological effects, such as stomach aches, headaches, breathlessness, catastrophic thinking, blanking out, freezing, pacing, eating too much, not feeling hungry, withdrawing, feeling depressive, tightening of shoulders and neck, sleeping problems, and the list could go on. Whilst a proportion of stress and anxiety can serve positively and help us prepare for the exams; too much stress can lead to the opposite.

There are many different mental exercises beneficial to prepare for exams, tests, interviews, etc. One of the most useful and proven techniques is visualization through guided imagery. Used by athletes, scientists, and professionals to prepare for important events in order to achieve their goals and increase higher chances of success. During guided imagery you create, step-by-step, the experience and the outcome you want to achieve in your mind's eye. Regular practice of visualization can directly act on our brain wiring and enable us to access the power to shift our thoughts from 'worry and pain' to 'calm and composed'. The research data suggests that such practices in everyday life can help improve confidence, resilience and everyday mood.

To develop practices of visualization and guided imagery, at first start with someone else guiding you through it. Once you have developed some understanding and are able to feel the benefits of visualization, then you can practice this anywhere by yourself.

Try this guided imagery for taking exams -

<https://thrivewithin.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/guided-imagery-script-taking-an-exam.pdf>

Example of Guided Imagery Script (adapted from thrive within) (15 minutes)

Shorten the script for students who may struggle listening for 15 minutes. Always pause and give time to visualise.



Taking an Exam [Adapted from materials from Inner Health Studio and Queen's University Learning Strategies Development]

Make yourself comfortable in a setting free of distractions for the next few minutes.

Find a naturally relaxed sitting position and open posture, your hands resting in your lap or at your sides, your legs uncrossed, and your head balanced in a neutral position.

Start to relax your body.

Take a breath in.....and let it out...gently. Avoid straining, easy breath in, easy breath out.

With each breath, you become more and more relaxed.

If any anxious thoughts linger, leave them where they are for the moment.

You can tend to them later. (Pause.)

Pick a spot in the room for your eyes to comfortably focus on.

Hold the focus briefly, and then let that focus go soft.

You can let your eyes close anytime you like.

Notice some areas in your body where tension tends to linger:

your shoulders,

jaws,

forehead,

neck,

back,

chest,

stomach,

and hands.

Feel the muscles as they loosen and your shoulders as they ease off....

Allow your jaws to relax.

Let your lower jaw drop slightly, allowing a space between your upper and lower teeth.

Feel the muscles of your face become smooth, loose, and relaxed.

Turn your attention to your neck. See how you can let the tension go as you relax the muscles of your neck.

As you become aware of the rhythm of your breathing, let the tension in your chest dissipate with each breath and feel your stomach muscles smooth themselves out and the calm settle in.

You are grounded and calm.

Begin to visualize now the process of taking an exam.

Imagine yourself on the day of the exam.

You are feeling a little excited to take the exam and share what you know; at the same time, you are feeling confident.

You imagine walking calmly into the room where the exam is going to be.

Try saying, *"When I get to my seat, I am thinking about the situation, not my anxiety."*

You see yourself sitting in your chair, calmly waiting.

You notice your surroundings, the colours of the wall, the table and chair, teachers around you.

You hear the other students shuffle in their seats.

You smile to them.

You feel the desk and the pen in your hand/ laptop.

Try to run your fingers on the keyboard gently and feel the ridges.

As you are about to start the test, you may feel a hint of the old anxiety rising.

You can say, *"I can be anxious later, now is the time to take the exam."*

Now, the exam is in front of you. You are scanning over the entire exam calmly and confidently.

You discover that you already know something about each answer.

You feel relaxed, and happy.

You start to organize your time.

You say, *"I will think rationally and not allow my anxiety to take over.... I have done well on exams before so there's no reason I can't today...."*

Take a breath in and exhale through your mouth.

Repeat to yourself, *'I am ready to rise up to meet this challenge.'*

Take in a deep breath and, slowly and calmly, let it all out.

You feel your body relax and allow your mind to become calm.

In this state of calm, you are able to concentrate and see things clearly.

Now you begin writing your exam. You can recall the information you studied.

The ideas are flowing with ease.

Some of the questions are easy and straightforward, and you answer them quickly.

Some questions take more thinking, but you expect this, and you are prepared.

You are now finished, and you close the exam and calmly put away your writing tools.

Finally, you are handing in the test with a big smile on your face.... because you did your best.

Savor this feeling, smile away.

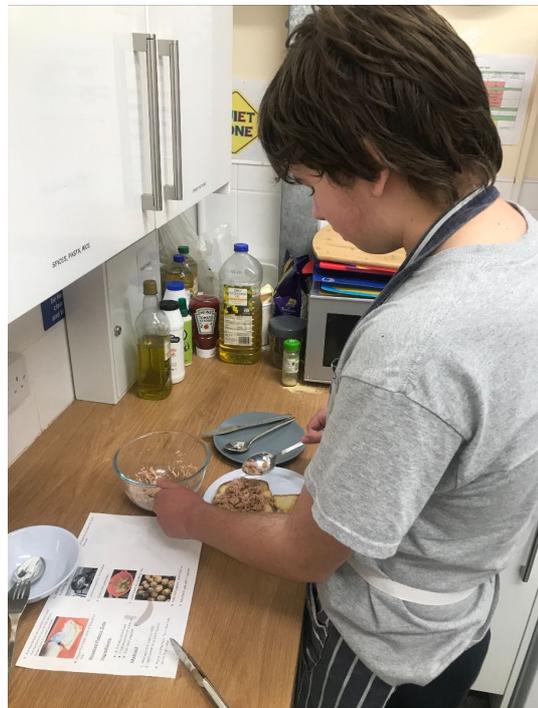
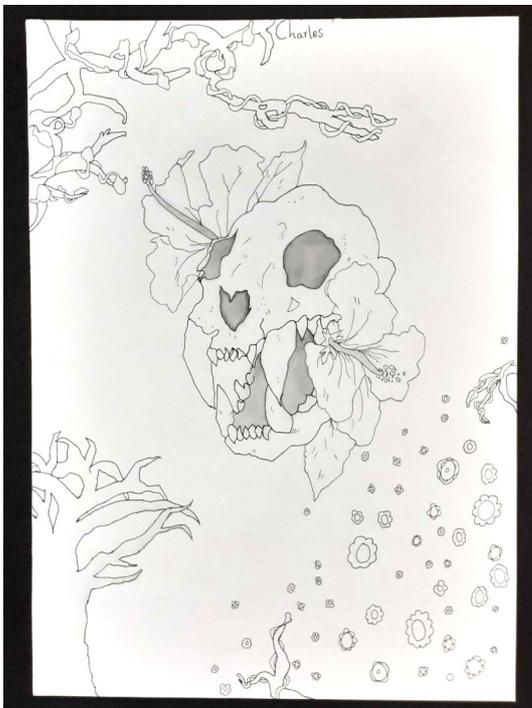
You may find that completing this guided imagery exercise helps you feel motivated, helps you feel calm, confident, and in control. Begin to wake up your mind and body.... returning your awareness to the present. Wiggle your fingers.

Feel your hands and arms reawakening.

Wake up your feet and legs by wiggling your toes. Shrug your shoulders.... Turn your head from side to side.... Feel your body waking up.

When you are feeling awake and alert, you can return to your usual activities, feeling energized, motivated, and confident.

The Holmewood Gallery



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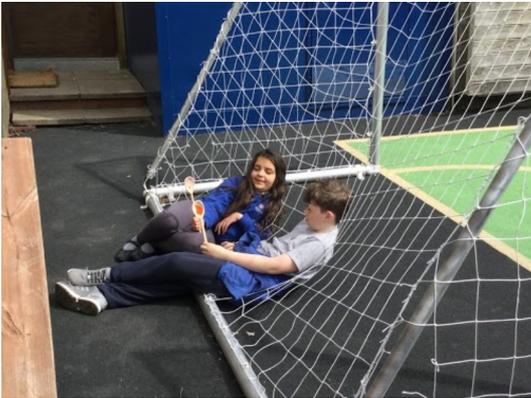
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Safeguarding

If you are a student and have been harmed, or are at risk of harm, these are the people who can help. You can also talk to us if you are worried that another student is at risk of harm.

Lower School			
			
Ms D'Silva (Assistant Head and Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer for Lower School, Level 3)	Ms Lemposzek (Head of Welfare & Behaviour, Deputy DSO for Lower School, Level 3)	Mr Gibbs (Humanities & PSHE Teacher, Deputy DSO for Lower School, Level 3)	Ms Camilleri (Executive Head, CEOP Ambassador and Deputy DSO, Level 3)
Upper School			
			
Mr Lamb (Deputy Head and Lead Designated Safeguarding Officer for Upper School, Level 3)	Ms Young (Head of School and Deputy DSO, Level 3)	Ms Young (Assistant Head and Deputy DSO, Level 3)	Ms Camilleri (Executive Head, CEOP Ambassador and Deputy DSO, Level 3)

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