



16 April 2021

Dear students, parents and carers

The issue of sexual harassment or abuse in education has been highlighted in the National press during the Easter holidays, and stemming from issues in some boarding schools, the website 'Everyone's Invited' has provided the opportunity for people to anonymously post experiences of harassment or abuse. Many of the shocking testimonials relate to experiences of young people at school.

In response to this, the NSPCC have provided a new helpline for people who have experienced sexual harassment or abuse in education. The link is below:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2021/sexual-abuse-victims-schools-helpline/>

We have a comprehensive Personal Development curriculum that is delivered to all year groups and some of the topics cover issues such as healthy relationships, respect for each other and consent. In addition, we will be re-visiting discussions with students about who their 'trusted adult' at school is. This is somebody who they could turn to should they wish to talk about anything that was worrying them, or that they felt uncomfortable about. All staff have received level 1 safeguarding training and some have received more extensive training so that they act as key safeguarding leads in the school. These staff are known to all students should they wish to make a disclosure of any kind.

The school has worked hard to promote a really safe and nurturing environment, where our young people can grow and develop into well-rounded adults and lead healthy lives in the future. This culture of respect is something we take very seriously and is one of our three core values of Respect, Responsibility and Relationships.

However, as a school with over 900 students, there are occasions where someone does something that is inappropriate. This can happen outside school when young people are socialising at parties, or in parks. We also know that there are times when someone says something in school that is inappropriate, or behaves in an inappropriate fashion towards another student. These behaviours are totally unacceptable, and we will always deal with them as a matter of urgency.

This letter is to remind everyone that should something happen that is of concern, please talk to someone at home or in school about it so that we can advise and help. Clearly, if there is anything that is a police matter, this must be reported to them immediately and we would ask that you also notify us so that we are aware from a safeguarding perspective and can provide appropriate support as necessary. Our intelligence systems are strong, however, we also rely on students helping us to ensure Ridgeway remains as safe as it can be, by letting us know immediately if something is worrying them.

If you would like to talk more on this issue, please contact the school and we will do our best to answer your queries.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mitcherson
Headteacher